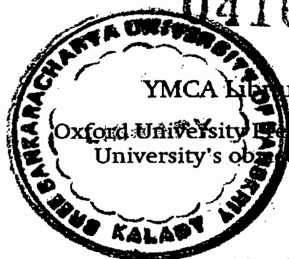
INDIAN PHILOSOPHERS AND POSTMODERN THINKERS

Dialogues on the Margins of Culture

Carl Olson

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This work is dedicated to Gary,
a brother, friend, and teammate,
who took the more postmodern and
carnivalesque approach to life.



Contents



Preface

Shaped by the influential work of Michel Foucault, there are some scholars like Edward W. Said and Ronald Inden who have called our attention to problems associated with comparative studies or work on eastern cultures by western scholars. Scholars like Said have correctly brought our attention to the past tradition of racism, ethnocentrism, and imperialism of western scholars. Much like their intellectual hero Foucault, they attempt to use their own textual creations as instruments of political power in order to influence others. Is not this type of political agenda under the guise of objective scholarship just as harmful as the kinds of scholarship that they expose and criticize in their books? Regardless of one's response to this question, there is a need for more give and take between eastern and western cultures in addition to greater mutual empathy and understanding. There is also a need to assume that eastern cultures can stand on their own creations and encounter western cultures as equal partners, and it is essential to stop the paternalistic attitude adopted by some western scholars towards various forms of eastern culture.

A good way to have an exchange between equals is through comparative philosophy. This work proposes to have such an encounter between selected Indian and postmodern thinkers by using a hermeneutical dialogue on the margin between eastern

and western cultures. The Indian philosophers that I have chosen represent a number of the major philosophical traditions in Indian culture: the Nikāya Buddhists; the Advaita Vedānta (non-dualism) of Śaṅkara; the Viśiṣṭādvaita (qualified non-dualism) of Rāmānuja; the Dvaita (dualism) of Madhva; and the Śaivādvaita or Kashmir Śaivism of Abhinavagupta. Even though my primary emphasis and focus will remain on these classical Indian philosophers because of their profound influence on the rest of the Indian philosophical tradition, I have also included the twentieth-century contributions of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and, to a lesser extent, the philosophies of Sri Aurobindo, J. N. Mohanty, and Daya Krishna. This approach will hopefully dispel any impression or misconception that Indian philosophy ended with the classical thinkers, and it will demonstrate that Indian philosophy continues to be an intrinsic part of a vital tradition. After a review of some recent approaches to comparative philosophy, we will introduce the element of play into our definition of comparative philosophy and look at some of the advantages of a hermeneutical dialogue. We will discover that comparative philosophy and its inherent concern with alterity is a pertinent activity within the context of the so-called postmodern era because it is risky, occurs on the margins, and is a liminal activity.

The central theme of the overall work is the postmodern attack on rationality and the place of reason in philosophy. Since the Indian philosophers that we will consider have long recognized the limitations of reason, we will need to call attention to the important role of intuition among some Indian philosophers, which can possibly serve as an alternative to the approach of many postmodern thinkers. Chapters 2 to 6 will demonstrate the various ways many postmodernists attack rationality and the role of reason in philosophy. Chapter 8 will discuss rationality more fully within the context of a hermeneutical dialogue with selected Indian philosophers and some postmodernists.

Language, writing, desire, suffering, abjection, death, the nature of the self, difference, ontology, and alterity are all topics of importance to postmodern thinkers. In a sense, this study lets the concerns of postmodern thinkers set the agenda of the dialogue with Indian thinkers. This approach is actually an advantage because it will give rise to new questions for Indian

philosophers. It will also give us a chance to grasp the kinds of thought or philosophical positions that postmodern thinkers are not willing to embrace. Although we have been using the term postmodern as a general term, the so-called postmodern philosophers do not speak with a single unified voice, just as there is no sole authentic philosophical voice for Indian culture. Thus, it appears best to have different thinkers engage each other in mutual dialogue rather than to write in more general terms about Indian philosophy and postmodern philosophy.

The dialogue between Indian philosophers and postmodern thinkers begins in Chapter 2 with a discussion about the different conceptions of language in Nikāya Buddhism, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Abhinavagupta, and Jacques Derrida. This chapter will include a discussion of the *mantra* in Indian culture as a special type of language. The chapter will conclude with a look at attitudes toward writing in Indian culture and some postmodern thinkers.

Chapter 3 compares the two sides on the topic of desire. We will compare the thinkers of the Upaniṣadic texts and Nikāya Buddhism with Deleuze and Guattari. Śaṅkara and Abhinavagupta will encounter the psychologist Jacques Lacan, and we will conclude by comparing Levinas with Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan on selected points germane to the topic of desire. Chapter 4 will compare Nikāya Buddhism and selected Hindu thinkers on the nature of suffering with Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection, a postmodern form of suffering. A dialogue between the Nikāya Buddhists and some postmodernists on death will complement the discussion on suffering and culminate with a consideration of the relationship between death, dying, and eroticism. The topic for discussion in Chapter 5 is the self. We will engage Śaṅkara in dialogue with Mark C. Taylor, Rāmānuja with Lacan, Nikāya Buddhism with Emmanuel Levinas, and Madhva with Derrida and Kristeva. We will conclude this chapter by comparing Charles Taylor with Radhakrishnan on the problems of identity and self-recognition.

In Chapter 6 we will notice that postmodernists tend to stress difference, which is grounded in their generally anti-metaphysical attitude, and Indians generally stress unity or identity of some kind, although the importance of difference in the philosophy of Madhva is an exception in the Indian tradition. More

specifically, this chapter will compare Derrida's special notion of *différance* with the stress on unity in the works of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Abhinavagupta, and Madhva. The topic of identity will be approached by comparing Derrida and Śaṅkara, Taylor with Rāmānuja, Levinas with Abhinavagupta, and Derrida and Madhva.

After an introductory discussion of Martin Heidegger's combining of ontology with alterity in his philosophy and a dialogue on these topics with Radhakrishnan, we will compare the positions of Levinas and Derrida on ontology with Rāmānuja, Abhinavagupta, and Madhva. Due to its importance in Derrida's philosophy, we will also compare what he writes about presence with Śaṅkara. And finally we will discuss alterity in the works of Levinas, Derrida, and Lacan and compare their thoughts on the subject with Śaṅkara. As already noted, we will discuss the general postmodern critique of rationality and the representational mode of thinking. We will compare the positions of Heidegger and Derrida with those of Śaṅkara, Levinas, and Radhakrishnan, and Kristeva and Taylor with Radhakrishnan. The final chapter will re-examine some of the themes of the various hermeneutical dialogues, and it will discuss the problem of ending the dialogue and further elucidate the nature of comparative philosophy.

A major reason for proposing a dialogue between Indian philosophers and postmodernists is to assert that classical Indian philosophy is not a dead cultural artifact that belongs in a museum. Another purpose of this work is to demonstrate that classical Indian philosophy can play a vital role in contemporary philosophical discussions. In short, classical Indian philosophy is not irrelevant in the so-called postmodern world, and continues to have enduring intellectual value. In fact, it can help us to grasp some problems in postmodern philosophy and some of its shortcomings.

I want to thank former President Daniel Sullivan and former Provost Andy Ford of Allegheny College for granting me the opportunity to serve as the Holder of the National Endowment for the Humanities Chair which allowed me the time to begin to research and write this book. I also want to thank former Dean James Bulman, Shakespearean scholar, actor, and general good person, for making a big difference in improving the

overall atmosphere on campus during his tenure as the Dean of the College. Moreover, let me thank our new Dean of the College Lloyd Michaels and President Richard Cook for graciously bestowing the Teacher–Scholar Chair in the Humanities to me for future scholarly adventures. This work was nurtured by my relationship to the most important women in my life—Peggy, Holly, and Kelly—and my colleagues at the college on the hill. Special mention must go to my colleague and friend Glenn for helping to keep a smile on my face, and thanks also to Helene for injecting some energy into the teaching of the department.



Abbreviations

AiB	*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*
AiU	*Aitareya Upaniṣad*
AV	*Atharavaveda Saṃhitā*
BhG	*Bhagavadgītā*
BĀU	*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*
ChU	*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*
KS	*Kāsyapa Saṃhitā*
KathU	*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*
KeU	*Kena Upaniṣad*
MbH	*Mahābhārata*
MNU	*Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad*
MaitU	*Maitri Upaniṣad*
MāU	*Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*
MuU	*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*
NPU	*Nāradaparivrājaka Upaniṣad*
PHU	*Paramahaṃsa Upaniṣad*
PĀU	*Prānāgnihotra Upaniṣad*
RV	*Ṛgveda Saṃhitā*
ŚB	*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*
ŚvetU	*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*
TB	*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*
TU	*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*



1 Beginnings and Margins

According to the postmodern writer Edmond Jabès, beginnings are very important because without a beginning there can be no end.[1] This assertion seems rather simplistic and obvious. If we consider the activity of writing a book, beginnings are not so simple and obvious. Again, Jabès informs us that a writer does not simply begin a book, because all beginnings are already contained in the book.[2] Thus the writing of a book is already in progress before one writes the first word. This process is made possible because language is without beginning. Thus we can merely imagine the origins of language or read the primordial myths about the origins of it. We find ourselves simply within language, which allows us to begin and get something accomplished. But we will never be able to bring this book to an end, as we will see at a later time.

In a sense this book is a product of its beginnings, because how the book commences determines what follows, even though to begin at the beginning is generally an arbitrary choice, just as it would have been an arbitrary decision to begin with a so-called introduction, as do many books. By assuming that a book offers a reader something, a beginning enables one to enter what is given in its contents. A beginning also offers a writer certain advantages: to establish a relationship to previous works; to enable us to make a departure from previous works; to begin

anew; to allow us to form our intention; to open us to an entire complex of relations.[3] If we take into consideration imaginatively the many works that preceded this one, this particular beginning represents a discontinuity, as will beginnings that succeed this one. The discontinuity that a beginning represents always involves a risk because there is a rupture with what preceded a wholly new beginning, which is a difficult undertaking because of pressures to conform, habitual ways of doing things, and previous loyalties.[4]

A beginning is not to be confused with an origin of a thing, because a beginning possesses more active characteristics, and origin is more passive in meaning.[5] A beginning has a precedence and/or priority due to its ability to indicate time, place, action, an object, principle, or intention, which is an initial step on the way to meaning.[6] Although not really separable in practice, Edward W. Said identifies two kinds of beginnings: one, temporal and transitive, and the other, intransitive and conceptual.[7] The latter kind is a paradoxical product of the human mind, while the former forms a flowing continuity that is more appropriate for action.

COMPARATIVE PHILOSOPHY, DIALOGUE, AND MARGINS

If comparative philosophy is to be done successfully, it needs a hermeneutical dialogue as a methodological tool. The nature of this hermeneutical dialogue needs to be unpacked. The term 'hermeneutics' refers to the art of interpretation that leads to understanding in the best possible manner. Since it is more than simply a consensual convergence, understanding must involve a willingness to take a risk and to enter the margins between oneself and the other. If one is willing to take such a risk, one is placing oneself inside an open arena of both dialogue and mutual questioning. Within the context of comparative philosophy, the interpreter is the third figure that brings together the representatives from different philosophical traditions, forming a triadic relationship and dialogue. In fact, the presence of the interpreter is absolutely necessary, as is a critical self-consciousness. The process of hermeneutics involves a self-interrogation in order to eradicate as far as possible the pitfalls of becoming solely dogmatic, polemical, or political. When the individual interprets texts from western and eastern philosophical traditions, he/she is involved in an ongoing process that takes place within the context of a particular community and tradition, and on the margins of East and West. From this precarious situation, the interpreter is also involved in a process of negotiation among the three parties (interpreter and representative philosophers from the East and the West). It is possible to avoid any arbitrariness of the process by grounding it in the historical situation of both the interpreter and the particular thinkers brought into dialogue. As the hermeneutical dialogue evolves, the interpretation involves a 'fusion of horizons', as Gadmer claims. This suggests that the meaning provided by the work of the interpreter and the divergent philosophers reaches a level of accommodation, if not agreement, between the different horizons of meaning provided by the triadic relationship. Therefore, the interpreter within the context of a cross-cultural hermeneutical dialogue is involved in a mode of thinking and working that is relational.

A hermeneutical dialogue is always in a state of flux because it is always unfolding, developing, and transforming the subjects discussed by the participants for the interpreter and the reader of the dialogue. The dialogical participants are not affected directly because texts are being used in place of absent or long deceased thinkers. However, their philosophical ideas are affected by the exchange in unpredictable ways that might not be recognized for a long time. This scenario suggests that hermeneutical dialogue is not intended to lead to a condition of absolute objectivity or to definitive philosophical positions. Hermeneutical dialogue is more similar to a ideal towards which one can aspire to work.

A hermeneutical dialogue admits the existence of certain presuppositions, pre-understandings, and prejudgements by the participants, of the subject matter to be discussed and interpreted. When interpreting classical texts of a foreign tradition both a permanence and excess of meaning must be acknowledged. An important implication of this type of approach is that a definitive interpretation or dialogical exchange is impossible. This suggests the continually incomplete nature of hermeneutical dialogue and the necessity for continued

exchange. It is necessary to avoid what Derrida calls polylogue, an unpronounceable conversation that is actually a writing apparatus. Derrida explains:

In effect two pieces of writing come face to face on the page: on the right hand side, the polylogue proper, an entanglement of an indeterminate number of voices, of which some seem masculine, others feminine, and this is sometimes marked in the grammar of the sentence. These readable grammatical signs disappear for the most part when spoken aloud, which aggravates a certain indecision between writing and voice...[8]

Derrida is indicating a tension between writing and speech. The possibility that any dialogue can degenerate into a cacophony of voices is a real danger. A hermeneutical dialogue intends for the meaningfulness of the exchange to emerge in what Martin Buber calls the *Zwischenmenschliche* (the between man and man).[9]

As we communicate with the other person, according to Habermas, we are always moving and communicating within the horizon of our lifeworld, consisting of language, culture, society, and the person, because we cannot step outside of it.[10] Unlike Habermas, I conceive of the lifeworld in a more ontological way than his primarily linguistic conception. Dialogue is an event of language, implying that it is actualized as language because someone is speaking to another person. Within this event of language, communicative participants encounter one another in a horizon of unrestricted possibilities of mutual understanding.[11] Just as a beginning commences before an actual beginning is made or the first word is written, a beginning marks the advent of understanding because it always starts within an already given horizon of understanding, and returns to this same horizon. This suggests that understanding is only possible if it possesses a characteristic of priority. Although one begins within the context of the lifeworld, I cannot totally agree with Habermas when he writes, 'The lifeworld forms the setting in which situational horizons shift, expand, or contract. It forms a context that, itself boundless, draws boundaries.'[12] I cannot totally agree because comparative philosophy goes to the boundaries and encounters the other on the margin, even though one does not completely leave one's lifeworld.

Even though a moment may arrive when there is a break or a pause in a dialogical encounter, there is no true end of dialogue because its inner dynamic represents a continual process.[13] Part of the inner dynamic of dialogue is its give-and-take which is expressed in listening, observing, speaking, correcting, and being corrected or challenged. Therefore, the hermeneutical dialogue of comparative philosophy is a never-ending process, which is why there can be no genuine ending of this book and dialogical encounter.

Within the context of the hermeneutical dialogue, I tend to agree with Mehta when he characterizes comparative philosophy as a game: 'There are no predetermined rules for a game of this kind, only the playing of the game can generate the rules, if at all.'[14] There are several features of play that are germane to hermeneutical dialogue and comparative philosophy. Play is not serious in the ordinary sense of the term because 'only seriousness in playing makes the play wholly play.'[15] The player gets lost or engrossed in play: 'The game is what holds the player in its spell, draws him into play, and keeps him there.'[16] Play is repetitive in the sense that it constantly renews itself, and it represents an effortless movement, a back-and-forth, and a to-and-fro. During the game, the player is always at risk.[17] Although it is true that play is without any goal or purpose, this cannot be asserted for hermeneutical dialogue, whose end is understanding. Affirming that hermeneutical dialogue possesses many of the characteristics of play frees it from being either an objective or a subjective activity because either we fully participate in a game or we risk spoiling it. If we correctly play the game of hermeneutical dialogue and are an integral part of it, we must interpret what we encounter from within the game.

Hermeneutical dialogue possesses two advantages: it bridges the distance between individuals and reveals the foreignness of the other person.[18] It also possesses several benefits that I specified in a previously published article:

It can help us to see not only the similarities and differences in the respective positions of philosophers, but it can also enable us to comprehend the value of philosophical insights foreign to our own tradition. It thus involves us in a comparative realm of meaning, places us spatially between Eastern and Western traditions, transcends the

historical time that separates philosophers, provides us with a possible common ground on which to understand each other, and sets us on the path to truth, which emerges in the dialogic exchange between thinkers who share similar human problems and concerns.[19]

When ideas are compared they must not become static intellectual concepts that are fit for a museum of the mind. They must be allowed to remain dynamic and creative, and be able to widen our horizons in order to enhance the opportunity for us to share a common human culture.

As each participant in the dialogical encounter makes his/her contribution to the dialogical exchange, it is not unreasonable to anticipate the emergence of meaning in the encounter of the participants. If meaning develops from the dialogical exchange, this suggests that meaning does not originate from, nor is grounded in, something prior to meaning, but that it develops from the dialogical encounter. Up to this point, I agree with Gilles Deleuze, the French postmodern philosopher, but I do not agree with his assertion that meaning is a machine producing local instances of sense. Further defining meaning, Deleuze states, 'It is not something to be discovered, restored, or re-employed, it is to be produced by new mechanisms. It belongs neither to any height nor to any depth; it is an effect of the surface, inseparable from the surface as its proper dimensions.'[20] If meaning emerges in the dialogical encounter, we cannot accept Deleuze's mechanistic language about the emergence of meaning, as if meaning could be produced like a pair of shoes. The reason that an individual can produce meaning for Deleuze is because meaning does not exist, as previously believed, in God, who has been betrayed by human norms, or in human beings, who have lost any original meaning because they are alienated from the image of God.[21] This type of thinking will be developed more fully within a dialogical context in later chapters of this work.

I agree with Yearley when he states that comparative philosophy is primarily a descriptive process that uses one's powers of analogical imagination, a constant working with the univocal and the equivocal, to enable one to identify similarities within differences and differences within similarities.[22] Due to the nature of the imaginative process and its standards for making

judgements, there is always the possibility of error, even though one pays close attention to the actual texts. Besides working from similarities, we must also be attentive to differences, 'if the comparisons are to be more than just tautological exercises.'[23] I also agree with Clooney when he calls attention to the temporal, experimental, and constructive aspects of comparison, which forges a previously non-existent link that cannot be justified on any historical basis.[24] Moreover, the process of comparison marginalizes and destabilizes texts by extricating them from their normal contexts and bringing them together in a new way. Clooney compares this feature of comparison to Derrida's notion of collage, which suggests selection, combination, decomposition, dissolution, and distortion. Collaged texts tend to destabilize each other's meanings when they encounter each other and thereby unsettle the reader, who is compelled to read in a new way.[25]

From a less destabilizing perspective, comparison can help us to formulate more precise distinctions. Comparison serves two major tasks for Theodor Schieder in his work entitled *Geschichte als Wissenschaft*: it helps to differentiate historically significant items by engaging them with, and distinguishing them from others, which he calls individualizing comparison, and secondly, leads to the development of general concepts by means of a comparative survey of the particular historical forms in which they appear, which he refers to as synthetic comparison.[26] It can be added that by means of comparison we classify, systematize, and understand material much better because it offers a deeper awareness of the complexity of philosophical notions. This implies that comparison is not some kind of reifying method. Moreover, by comparing Indian philosophy with that of selected postmodernists, we do not violate the spirit of the Indian philosophical tradition because it frequently recognized comparison (*upamāna*) as a valid means of knowledge. Along with the acceptance of perception (*pratyaksa*), inference (*anumāna*), verbal testimony (*śabda*), presumption (*arthāpatti*), and negation (*abhāva*), the Vedānta philosopher Maṇḍana Miśra (660–720) stated, for instance, that the object of comparison is a similarity (*sādrśya*) which is based on difference.[27]

By its very nature, comparative philosophy is always in some sense about alterity. In the dialogue between eastern and

western philosophy, the Easterner is always other to the Westerner and vice versa, because each participant's worldview, philosophy, lifestyle, person, and prejudices remain 'other' no matter how empathically each participant acts in the dialogical encounter. Although the other is exterior to us, we still have the ability to recognize the other as resembling us in some sense.[28] Overall, our relationship with the other is mysterious, which is why a hermeneutical dialogue is a necessity in comparative philosophy. The relationship with the other takes place within a lifeworld, and it puts into question the world possessed by each participant. When we speak to the other, we speak our world to the other, and vice versa. But it is language that accomplishes the primordial placing into a common milieu.[29]

Comparative philosophy involves welcoming the other as other. Any freedom on my part to encounter, possess, and enjoy the other by reducing him or her to the same, is called into question by the dynamics of the dialogical encounter, and exposes my arbitrariness and violence. The call summons me not to possession or reduction, but to take responsibility for the other. By encountering the other in dialogue, I undo the structure of intentionality that assumes a privileged place in the philosophy of Husserl and makes the other into an object constituted by the forms of intentionality, and subordinates language to acts of perception and conception. According to Levinas, the other enables me to witness Infinity, a thought that every moment thinks more than it thinks, because it is manifested in relationship with the other.[30] The other is also radically significant for my own self-understanding.

In contrast to the narrow specialist, an individual doing comparative philosophy is by nature promiscuous because such a person is ever broadening his/her horizons and trying out new directions, new ideas, new lifestyles, new thoughts, and different ways of being human. It is absolutely necessary for the comparative thinker to be intellectually promiscuous because comparative philosophy ultimately represents a fusion of horizons. The Indian philosophers who will be discussed in this book, for instance, represent horizons among themselves. On the other hand, the postmodern thinkers, the other major party of the dialogue to follow, represent another horizon. As the author of this work, I stand for another horizon, and any reader will bring

yet another horizon to this book. Regardless of the number of horizons involved in the hermeneutical dialogue, it takes place within a certain location.

Comparative philosophy occurs on the borders or margins of scholarship, which makes it a very postmodern intellectual endeavour. In his postmodern vision of human existence, Derrida sees us living on the border, an uncertain, risky, and dangerous place. He partially expresses his view in the following words: 'No one inflection enjoys any absolute privilege, no meaning can be fixed or decided upon. No border is guaranteed, inside or out.'[31] Without entirely agreeing with Derrida, I want to affirm that comparative philosophy is a risky business because we have to take chances and not be afraid to be wrong. In relationship to the other, there is also a personal risk for a dialogical participant: 'For there is no genuine dialogue without the willingness to risk all one's present self-understanding in the presence of the other...'[32] Comparative philosophy is also risky business because it takes place on the boundaries of cultures and the participant must stand between two or more contending groups as they exchange ideas. Moreover, to enter into a dialogue with others is risky because one exposes oneself to otherness, and 'it requires a willingness to "risk oneself", that is, to plunge headlong into a transformative learning process in which the status of self and other are continuously renegotiated.'[33] In a letter written by a Jewish character named Yukel in one of Edmond Jabès' unusual and creative books, the character says: 'I have always preferred being on the margin because it gives a perspective which allows us to judge, imagine, love, live, within the moment and outside it, free, but with the freedom of a slave who dreams of it.'[34] Within the context of engaging in comparative philosophy, I agree with Jabès' character that being on the margin gives one a certain perspective and freedom that one might not possess in ordinary life. Jabès' character continues to explicate what he means by the margin: 'Being on the margin means having reached the place of the present. The place of before-and-after-place.'[35] By means of the dialogical encounter of comparative philosophy, the present emerges in the 'between' of the encounter. Finally, I cannot agree with Jabès' character when he states: 'On the margin you cannot be touched, so that people have taken this position for one of withdrawal, a retreat

in itself, an escape.'[36] Even though comparative philosophy takes place on the margin, this does not mean that it should be comprehended as a withdrawal or escape from life because the comparative philosopher is very much involved in the life of more than one culture. Finally, since comparative philosophy takes place on the margins of East and West, it is a liminal activity and the comparative philosopher is a liminal being. The individual involved in hermeneutical dialogue is also liminal, because the process of interpretation labours in a liminal area between what is concealed and what is revealed, or between one person and another.

The marginal and liminal nature of comparative philosophy compromises context to some degree, but context is not entirely lost, because the interpreter (the third party in the dialogue) remains aware that the participants from East and West speak from different contexts, as does the interpreter. During the course of our lives, we live in many contexts that are different depending on our station or situation in life (e.g., child/adult, married/unmarried, employed/unemployed, healthy/sick). We not only live in different situations and contexts, but we also communicate with others from within whatever context(s) we exist in at any given moment. Even though comparative philosophy is a marginal and liminal activity, the interpreter and the dialogical participants that are gathered together each constitute a different context. Thus each party uses a different voice, shaped by its cultural and historical context. By engaging in a hermeneutical dialogue, some context is, however, compromised but not its totality. This is because each participant, even though deceased for a long time, representing another culture, or coming from another historical time period, shares or shared a fundamental humanity and may have confronted an issue, like the nature of the self, much like those in other cultures, although responses to the problem may be different. By proceeding to the margin of one's culture to engage in a hermeneutical dialogue that is by nature marginal and liminal, the context that is compromised gives witness to a greater gain. This greater gain is the cross-cultural exchange of ideas, possible cross-fertilization, and the potential for making a contribution to solving vexing problems or issues. Because comparative philosophy takes into consideration the thought of the other and

includes the other in its own understanding, it is, moreover, possible to make progress against ethnocentrism, which serves as an additional gain. It is helpful to remember that after the dialogue all participants return to their original contexts, although ideally the interpreter and the reader are enriched by the experience. This hoped for gain is related to the risky nature of comparative philosophy.

Within the context of this particular book, the proposed hermeneutical dialogue will serve as a small step in the direction of getting beyond Orientalism, and its stereotypes of both East and West. This can serve as another gain. In addition, postmodern philosophy represents both a reaction to the tradition of the Enlightenment and a challenge to western thought. Since we live in an ever-growing global community due to such technologies as the computer, the postmodern challenge is not merely confined to western philosophy, because it potentially represents a new form of Orientalism and a challenge to Indian thought. Thus, a hermeneutical dialogue can serve as a means to respond to the challenge posed by postmodern thought to both East and West.

RECENT APPROACHES TO COMPARATIVE PHILOSOPHY

In order to place this work in some kind of context, it will prove helpful to briefly review more recent approaches to comparative philosophy, because some of these efforts have shaped this work to some degree. The practice of comparative philosophy is actually very ancient because comparative philosophizing within a single tradition has taken place in both eastern and western cultures for a long time, whereas cross-cultural studies are more recent. Without claiming to be exhaustive, I propose to review a selected number of noteworthy attempts to redefine the nature and purpose of comparative philosophy.

If early attempts at comparative philosophy were interested in discovering similarities between different philosophical traditions, there is growing agreement now that we must not gloss over the differences between philosophical traditions.[37] When doing this it is important not to give a privileged place to any culture.[38] Potter proposes that metaphor, which permeates our ways of talking and thinking about things, be used as a key to

doing comparative philosophy, because it helps us understand one thing in terms of another. By discovering metaphorical links, distinct categories can be created that enable us to develop a priori boundaries that will help us create an empirical and rigorous science.[39] Another approach is offered by Panikkar who calls for a dialogical or imparative philosophy (a position suggested by the medieval Latin term *imparare* that stresses an open philosophical attitude that is ready to learn from others without claiming to compare philosophies from an objective, neutral, or transcendent perspective).[40] It is very possible that this a priori or metaphilosophy could function to paradoxically legitimize and strengthen pluralism, according to Panikkar. An even more ambitious project is espoused by Neville who thinks that it is time for a philosophy of world religions: 'The question no longer is whether (this) religion is true but rather what various and unusual truths are expressed or embodied in the diverse religions of the world.'[41] Neville's comparative approach leads him to conclude that God should not be construed in a narrowly theistic sense.

There is also a style of comparative philosophy that utilizes the insights of eastern philosophy in an even more rigorous way in order to solve philosophical problems encountered by western thinkers. A good example of this type of approach is a book by John Grimes using an Advaita Vedānta perspective on language to better understand religious discourse. Assuming the Advaita Vedānta viewpoint, Grimes writes, 'Religious discourse is thus a direct informant of Reality which is radically but a matter of direct experience.'[42] Parts of his book contain an informative discussion of language in Indian philosophy, but an appeal to direct experience to legitimate religious discourse will probably not convince many western philosophers or theologians. This observation is less a criticism of Grimes and more a critical observation about his intended audience. An even more graceful use of eastern and western philosophy to develop a personal philosophical position is the work of Eliot Deutsch in his book *Creative Being: The Crafting of Person and World* that forms a coherent and creative whole that is more convincing to a reader of philosophy.[43]

Various authors envision different aims for comparative philosophy. Parkes thinks that comparative philosophy is not merely an understanding of the philosophies to be compared, but also represents an understanding of the world.[44] On the other hand, Ben-Ami Scharfstein argues that comparative philosophy enables us to become aware of a wide variety of philosophical positions, it can make it easier to see that some philosophical positions and arguments are truly universal, and it encourages us to think comparatively and thus avoid becoming provincial.[45] From a different perspective, Mehta sees the aim of comparative philosophy as a chance to reveal the hidden truth of the different paths of thinking by engaging in a game:

> This involves a movement of thought that is less like an arrow in flight toward its target than a roving and rambling, a movement to and fro, between two different realms of discourse and vision, an exploration of two different topologies. There are no predetermined rules for a game of this kind, only the playing of the game can generate the rules, if at all.[46]

Mehta obviously does not want a comparative philosophy that is limited to the construction of new concepts overarching diverse philosophical traditions. And he does not think that a motif from one tradition can be used to supplement a deficiency or solve a problem in one's own philosophy.

An unfortunately less playful, if not more complex, approach to comparative philosophy is offered by Dilworth, who thinks that it is not possible to refute or deconstruct any of the great philosophical works. He thinks that it is wiser to repossess and reappreciate the masterpieces of philosophy. In order to enhance this process, Dilworth constructs a theoretical framework that he hopes can repossess eastern and western philosophical heritages. Dilworth's comparative hermeneutic requires two things: a holistic orientation to the classical texts and a resolution of convergent and divergent points within the works.[47] Dilworth identifies four transcendental principles, due to their function as semantic factors or causes of meaning, of philosophical texts: authorial perspective, ontological focus, method of articulation, and grounding principle. The personal, objective, diaphanic (witness to a higher wisdom or revelation of absolute knowledge), and disciplinary are forms of the authorial perspective. The ontological focus includes the existential, substrative, noumenal, and essential. The different methods of

articulation are the agonistic or paradoxical, logistic or computional, dialectical or sublational, and synoptic or problematic. The grounding principles are creative, elemental or simple, comprehensive, or reflexive. By using these categories to characterize different philosophies, Dilworth proves the subjective nature of comparative scholarship. Dilworth's approach is also evidence of isogesis, an unconscious reading into a philosophical text of what one anticipates to see or is trained to see in a text, which exemplifies understanding because it is an integral part of the interpretive process.[48] There is also little evidence of dialogue or historical context in Dilworth's book. His work tends to impose a preconceived western set of archetypes.

In a work that possesses important implications for this comparative study because of its attention to postmodern philosophy, David Loy offers an approach to a study of non-duality that he claims is hermeneutical. Loy criticizes the postmodern philosophy of Derrida for not being radical enough in its methodology:

> From the nondualist perspective, the problem with Derrida's radical critique of Western philosophy is that it is not radical enough: his deconstruction is incomplete because it does not deconstruct itself and attain that clôture which...is the opening to something else. This is why Derrida remains in the halfway house of proliferating 'pure textuality,' whereas deconstruction could lead to a transformed mode of experiencing the world.[49]

A problem with Loy's criticism is that he does not fully understand the process of deconstruction from Derrida's perspective, which is an approach of an absolute heterogeneity that undermines all the assurances gained by one's comfortable connection with what one accepts as the same. What Loy appears to misunderstand about deconstruction is that it wants to unlock structures in order to allow difference to function more freely and creatively, which will hopefully develop into new forms.

Another problem with Loy's book, which is written from a Zen Buddhist perspective, is that his approach is reductionistic, and not deconstructive in any real sense. Unlike a true deconstructive method that would tend to emphasize differences, Loy's book

stresses similarities and congruencies because it presupposes a single non-dual experience. It is unclear why Loy would claim to use a method that is designed to elicit differences. Furthermore, his approach is totally non-dialogical, which is a drawback from my perspective.

What Loy does not grasp about deconstruction is that it is not a method and it cannot be transformed into one.[50] It is also not a singular event, an act, or an operation. Deconstruction does, however, take place as an event that does not wait for any conscious deliberation of a subject. When it takes place, and it can take place everywhere, deconstruction deconstructs itself.[51] According to Derrida, the term 'deconstruction' is ambiguous, and he acknowledges borrowing the term from the Heideggerian word *Destruktion* or *Abbau*. The term 'deconstruction' is ambiguous in French because it does not have a lucid and univocal signification, although the term inspires disarranging the construction of terms in a sentence, and disassembling the parts of a whole.[52] Any meaning of deconstruction gets lost when Derrida informs us that it is not everything and it is nothing. Any value of the term, like all other words, is acquired only from its inscription in a series of possible substitutions or a context.[53] In the manner in which it actually functions for Derrida, deconstruction is parasitic because it preys on other readings or interpretations in a never-ending process.

THE CHALLENGE OF ORIENTALISM

Since this hermeneutical dialogue between Indian philosophers and the postmodernists is partly intended to get us beyond so-called Orientalism, it seems reasonable to review this challenge to comparative studies. And this challenge can be met by reviewing what is at stake with Orientalism for both the East and the West. In order to accomplish this review, we intend to look at the contributions to this issue of Edward W. Said, Ronald Inden, and J. J. Clarke.

If we think once again about the issue of beginnings using the reflections of Said, we find that he confesses to have discovered an important lesson: 'Beginnings have to be made for each project in such a way as to *enable* what follows from them.'[54] In other words, a starting point is not a mere given for one to use

at one's leisure. Neither is there a given presence in written language, because there is only a representation, even though a written statement can be present to a reader, by having displaced the real thing with something else. Having taken this postmodern philosophical position, Said applies this to the topic that he calls 'Orientalism', an invention of the western scholarly mind. Even though the western scholar may have had his understanding of the Orient provoked by the real thing, his vision was rarely guided by the real Orient: 'Orientalism responded more to the culture that produced it than to its putative object, which was also produced by the West.'[55]

According to Said, Orientalism, a created body of theory and practice, is a style of western scholarship that has been used by its practitioners as a tool to dominate, restructure, particularize, and divide oriental things into components that can be more easily managed and manipulated. This is done with the intention of exerting hegemony based on the assumed superiority of European ideas over the backward ideas and practices of the Orient. This western style of scholarship represents a long history of western domination and exploitation of oriental cultures that helps to explain the current plight of these denigrated cultures: 'The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony...'[56] This kind of scholarship embodied within itself racism, ethnocentrism, imperialism, and convictions about western superiority. The guilty European scholars did not objectively describe what they witnessed in the Orient, but rather recreated the Orient, which assumed the guise of an unchanging entity.

It is not unimportant that western scholars, for Said, described the Orient in books, because a book assumes over time a greater authority and utility than the actual phenomena that it allegedly describes.[57] This type of scholarship creates a crisis for those being described because the readers are shaped by what they have read, forming a reinforcement and determination of a reader's experience. Not only does the reader become what he/she reads, the books themselves create the knowledge and reality that they allegedly describe. This produces a tradition or way of looking at foreign cultures that establishes a set of constraints upon thought, and sets limitations on

what thought can be examined in an unprejudiced way. According to Said, Orientalism is a political vision of reality that promotes difference between the common and the foreign that degenerates into an anti-human attitude on the part of its practitioners.

Once the vision of Orientalism is accepted and embodied within a text, it is extremely difficult to change the picture of the East created by the westerners because the vision contained within the text constrains any subsequent interpretation. Said asserts, 'This means that a text has a specific situation, placing restraints upon the interpreter and his interpretation not because the situation is hidden within the text as a mystery, but rather because the situation exists at the same level of surface particularity as the textual object itself.'[58] Joining what he considers the perspicacity of Nietzsche on this subject, Said concludes that texts are basically instruments of power. Within the context in which the phenomenon of Orientalism developed, texts served the hegemonic interests of western political powers that further promoted an unequal relation between themselves as the colonizers and oppressors over the unfortunate colonized and oppressed Orient. The lives of texts, for Said, are not in any sense ideal, but are rather matters of force and conflict: 'Texts incorporate discourse, sometimes violently.'[59] Implied in the argument of Said is the fact that a text, although it is an instrument of power and can keep one in bondage, can also be used as a power to free the oppressed. And this assumes, of course, that the texts have readers.

Said has done a marvellous job of exposing the wrong ways for Eastern and Western cultures to encounter each other. But his own work is a clever attempt to turn the tables on western scholars and intimate them with the power of his own text. Said acknowledges personally, 'In many ways my study of Orientalism has been an attempt to inventory the traces upon me, the Oriental subject, of culture whose domination has been so powerful a factor in the life of all Orientals.'[60] Since he is convinced that a text is an instrument of power, Said attempts to use this power against the West, just as, in his mind, the West used it as a political tool to suppress the Orient. Thus Said's work contains a political agenda, and it serves as an excellent example of hermeneutics used for political purposes.

There is a certain irony contained in Said's discussion of Orientalism. Said, a Palestinian and member of the so-called third world, uses some of the philosophical notions of Michel Foucault, the French postmodern or post-structuralist (either or both designations could be applied to his work), philosopher-historian, and Nietzsche, to develop his own theory. It is ironical that Said would use some of the philosophical theories of Foucault and Nietzsche, members of former European colonial powers. According to Said's philosophical hero Foucault, knowledge is power and it tends to be coercive in order to gain control.[61] Said's intention is to use his knowledge to control western views of the East. What we have in Said's book is a clever attempt, by a self-portrayed powerless person, to turn the tables on the powerful. By using western philosophy to construct his argument, and not something from the East, Said indirectly confirms the prejudice of members of so-called Orientalism about the East, that it possesses nothing of enduring intellectual value to offer to the western mind. Moreover, Said's characterization of Orientalism functions in his work as a kind of evil bogeyman, that reminds one of fundamentalism in America and its polemic against secular humanism for its alleged godlessness and divinization of man/woman.

Another problem with Said's postmodern approach to comparative studies is his concept of culture, which is for him a system of discriminations and evaluations. Said tends to conceptualize culture in terms of power relationships. When a particular group in a given country identifies itself with the prevailing cultural milieu, that culture tends to become tyrannical

> ...and it also means that culture is a system of exclusions legislated from above but enacted throughout its polity, by which such things as anarchy, disorder, irrationality, inferiority, bad taste, and immorality are identified, then deposited outside the culture and kept there by the power of the State and its institutions.[62]

By a continual process of differentiation of itself from what it perceives to be different from itself, culture protects and conforms itself and gains hegemony over its society and state. Thereby, it vindicates its power over everything different.[63] Again, we witness the influence of Foucault upon Said and the former's view of culture as a repressive means to power.[64] Although it is true that a given culture can become oppressive and even tyrannical, Said's view is too one-dimensional because he neglects the way in which a culture can act as a bearer of symbols, values, customs, institutions, and meanings for its adherents. Since there is an inevitable tyranny built into the fabric of any culture for Said, it is impossible for any group to legitimate its cultural identity. McGowan indicates the advantage of taking such a stance: 'This position has the advantage of undermining (delegitimating) all existent social forms but points only to an anarchic "politics of difference" as an alternative.'[65] Lisa Lowe questions Said's assumption that Orientalism monolithically constructs the Orient as the other of the Occident.[66] Moreover, Rosane Rocher criticizes Said for creating a single discourse that is undifferentiated within time and space, and across political, social and intellectual identities.[67]

Other writers have criticized Said on more epistemological grounds. Halbfass cannot understand how it would be possible for a westerner to study another culture without certain preconceptions, and to eliminate another culture from all non-indigenous categories of understanding.[68] And if an oriental culture were freed of Eurocentric presuppositions and constructs, would it have an identity free from all constructs? Halbfass does not think that an oriental culture could be freed of all constructs, because of the internal superimpositions that tend to derive from different forces, with any culture.[69] From a different perspective, Gallagher describes succinctly the epistemological impasse Said encounters: 'He writes of distortions of reality while denying the existence of a reality beneath the distortions. He notes that knowledge is always bounded by place but insists that there is an epistemologically locus of displacement called exile.'[70]

Said's use of spatial metaphors (e.g., distance, exile, margins) is instructive because it indicates that he favours models of escape, and that criticism should take place between culture and system in individual consciousness, which is distanced from both of them. These spatial metaphors are problematic with the notion of the other: 'To put it another way, to imagine the other as distant and separate is profoundly undialectical.'[71] It also places oneself outside social relations, whether they are Western or Eastern.

Even though Said exposes the false ideas, presuppositions, and stereotypes that western scholars formed of the Orient, his work exemplifies his own prejudices. The West is depicted as responsible for the current problems of the East, due to western ideas and attitudes that have undermined traditional eastern cultures by enslaving them and making them feel inferior. To turn his own postmodern perspective against him, it can be stated that Said's work becomes an artefact or an episode in the history of eastern responses to western views of the Orient. Thus the stereotypes and prejudices of western scholars of the Orient are supplemented in Derrida's sense of the term—an addition to, a surplus—by Said's equally stereotypical, prejudicial, and political work.

Acknowledging his agreement with Said and following in his intellectual footsteps, Ronald Inden focuses on Orientalism in India and how it served as a device to dominate the country. Although Inden claims that his perspective is that of a historian, there is not much historical perspective in his book. There is, however, a definite postmodern viewpoint with the use of some of Michel Foucault's ideas and the deconstructive method of Derrida. These heterological methodologies of French postmodernism, even though they might potentially conflict with each other (a possibility that does not appear to concern Inden), are used, in part, to examine certain invidious uses of metaphors that have been constructed by western scholars. These metaphors are based on consciously made assumptions and tacitly believed presuppositions rooted in a positivistic, rationalistic epistemology and a presupposed ontological unity embedded in an Indological discourse. Within the metaphors and other forms of discourse, Inden intends to expose what he calls essentialism, a style of western scholarly writing that built essences into its metaphors.[72] If one examines closely the Indological discourse of western scholars, one will discover naturalistic assumptions, evolutionism, functionalism, and utilitarianism. Turning the tables on Inden, if we examine his own work, we will find assumptions and discourse common to postmodern thinkers. Inden accepts, for instance, the postmodern rhetoric about the power of hegemonic texts: 'That is, the hegemonic text is an instrument not simply for browbeating those who demur but also for exercising a positive intellectual

and moral leadership both within the educational institutions and in the other institutions that make and remake imperial formations.'[73] What Inden is trying to indicate is that a hegemonic text, or a most influential book, possesses a totalizing dominant effect upon others. There have been very few texts in the entire history of ideas that have had that kind of power, and the texts cited by Inden do not measure up to the all-powerful influence allegedly exerted by a hegemonic text, according to his own definition.

From the perspective of Inden, western scholars have merely imagined India to be a dream state: irrational, imprisoned by its caste system, governed by superstition, backward, and inferior: 'My main argument, then, is that the agency of Indians, the capacity of Indians to make their world, has been displaced in those knowledges on to other agents.'[74] The Western use of taxonomies to classify others is a good example of how they are reduced to an inferior position. Inden proposes an alternative to the essentialism of orientalist discourse that he calls a theory of human agency: 'I argue that far from embodying simple, unchanging essences, all agents are relatively complex and shifting. They make and remake one another through a dialectic process in changing situations.'[75] This proposal is certainly better than the discourse of western Orientalists. But is this not also a western import? Any response to this rhetorical question suggests a positive answer. Moreover, Inden's postmodern approach and methodology is as foreign to Indian culture as the portrait of India provided by European scholars that he criticizes.

Even though Inden is more than justified to indicate the presuppositions of western Indologists and their generally negative view of Indian culture, there are other methodological problems with Inden's work. When discussing the use of explanatory accounts by western Indologists, Inden observes: 'The condensation and displacement which Indologists attribute to the Indian mind in the characterizing of their texts make the thoughts and practices of the ancient Indian seem alien and stress his difference from the man of the West.'[76] Although there is considerable justification for Inden's comments, it is ironic that he would choose to use methods from postmodern thinkers that stress differences and denigrate

commonality. Inden's heterological methodology and agreement with Said places his own work within the sphere of political hermeneutics so common among postmodern writers. Inden's choice of deconstruction as a method is a strange decision based on his own subject matter and Derrida's definition of it. Derrida claims that deconstruction is not a method in the ordinary sense because it exceeds what is reasonable and undermines reason by crossing out, double-crossing, or violating it.[77] From this definition, it does not appear that deconstruction will result in new knowledge. This may be the reason that Inden also uses the term *episteme* that he borrows from Foucault, to stress a way of knowing that implies a particular view of existence and presupposes a representational view of knowledge.[78] It is a bit odd that Inden would use a term that had such a short life in Foucault's philosophy, and that is not a form of knowledge or a type of rationality. For Foucault, *episteme* is the totality of relations that can be discovered for a given period.[79] Moreover, Inden is not a true deconstructionist because he cannot refrain from reconstructing how caste, for instance, can be rethought as a form of citizenship,[80] and how divine kingship is not despotic or irrational, but rather represents a set of practices that enabled kings and courts to establish political societies of kings which were dialectically ordered, rather than administratively united or feudally divided.[81]

In contrast to Said and Inden, a more nuanced and balanced approach to the problem of Orientalism is offered by J. J. Clarke, who finds a wide range of attitudes embodied within Orientalism that are often affirmative, and demonstrate an attempt by the West to integrate eastern thought into its intellectual concerns. And unlike Said and Inden, these more affirmative attitudes cannot be explained as matters of 'power' and 'domination.' To view Orientalism as simply a ruling imperialist ideology means to miss its role in the western context as 'a counter-movement, a subversive entelechy, albeit not a unified or consciously organised one, which in various ways has often tended to subvert rather than to confirm the discursive structures of imperial power.'[82] Clarke acknowledges that the reaction of Westerners to the East was patronizing, chauvinistic, and racist. And yet Westerners also exhibited a fascination with the East that manifested itself in a tendency to romanticize the East, and

contributed to a systematic misrepresentation and oversimplification of it. Clarke criticizes Said for the narrowness of his explanation, a tendency to reductionism, and for ignoring the complexity of the motivations for Orientalism. What Said fails to acknowledge is that 'Eastern ideas have been used in the West as an agency for self-criticism and self-renewal, whether in the political, moral, or religious spheres.'[83] Clarke goes on to argue that Orientalism has served as a corrective mirror in the West that 'provides a conceptual framework that allows much fertile cross-referencing, the discovery of similarities, analogies, and models; in other words, the underpinning of a productive hermeneutical relationship.'[84] However, Clarke goes astray when he agrees with Said that all human knowledge is political. It is only necessary to call attention to the apolitical nature of mathematics and scientific discoveries in DNA research, for instance, to refute such an argument, although such knowledge could be used for political purposes.

Nonetheless, Said's book and Inden's work on the shortcomings of Orientalism do have lessons to teach us about how not to do cross-cultural scholarship. Their work should not, however, intimidate us, or deter us from doing cross-cultural studies, because Said and Inden are just as guilty of using hermeneutics for political purposes as those figures that they discuss in their books. Both sides—East and West—need to make new beginnings. Along with other contributions to cross-cultural studies, this work is a small step in that direction.

If we take into consideration the previous criticisms levelled against Said and Inden by myself and others, a critic could argue that any proposal for a hermeneutical dialogue within the context of comparative philosophy is superimposing a foreign method upon Indian philosophy. This is certainly a legitimate concern. However, if the critic takes into consideration the historical and essential nature of Indian philosophy, it becomes obvious that a hermeneutical dialogue or comparative approach is not alien to the Indian philosophical tradition. During the development of many different schools of Indian philosophy, each particular school, or particular thinkers within a given school, engaged in dialogue with Jains, Buddhists, or members of other Indian schools of thought. Thus, the historical development of Indian philosophy with its emphasis on orality,

commentary upon authoritative texts, debate, and criticism of opponents, manifests a tendency towards doing philosophy in a dialogical or comparative manner.

INDIAN PHILOSOPHERS AND POSTMODERN THINKERS

In this book I propose to bring ancient, medieval, and, to a lesser extent, contemporary Indian philosophers into hermeneutical dialogue with postmodern thinkers. The philosopher, as a representative of Indian culture, speaks with many voices, which necessitates my using the philosophy of several philosophers. Thus I will use the philosophy of such figures as the thinkers of the *Upaniṣads,* the Buddha in the Pali canon (or what is sometimes called Nikāya Buddhism), Buddhaghoṣa, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Abhinavagupta, and Madhva. The common denominator among these Indian figures is the advocacy of the necessity of freedom (*mokṣa*) by each of them, and this functions to narrow the participants in the coming dialogue, although it certainly does not exhaust them. Karl Potter advocates this type of approach to Indian philosophy.[85] Daya Krishna criticizes Potter because Indian philosophy is irrelevant to the quest for liberation, many Indian philosophers and schools of philosophy are not concerned with liberation, and freedom is not the sole concern of Indian philosophy.[86] There is much merit in Daya Krishna's position. But he misrepresents Potter's position when he states: 'Potter has confined himself to considering scepticism and fatalism as the only two intellectual obstructions on the path to *mokṣa,* but this limitation is neither necessary nor desirable for the consideration of the truth or validity of this conception concerning Indian philosophy.'[87] Krishna is right to assert that there is no need to confine intellectual difficulties to only these specific types, but he fails to grasp that what Potter is identifying is the threat of scepticism and fatalism coming from the West. If we take postmodern philosophy as an example of a western threat of radical scepticism, Potter proves to be prophetic in his observation. In addition to the ancient and medieval thinkers of India, I will also include some of the philosophical insights of the following thinkers: Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan, Mohanty, and Daya Krishna. For the most part, I will not go into extensive detail with respect to these contemporary Indian philosophers

in order to avoid redundancy and to keep the dialogue within manageable dimensions, although I make an exception in the case of Radhakrishnan. Nonetheless, the contemporary Indian philosophers can be understood as mediators between India's classical past and its democratic present.

The Indian philosophers selected for this dialogue with postmodern thinkers were chosen because of their historical significance for the development of the intellectual heritage of India and the distinctive philosophical position each group or person represents. The term 'Nikāya Buddhism' is used to refer to the teachings of the historical Buddha, as filtered through, and interpreted by, the Buddhist monastic community. And it acknowledges that it is difficult to determine with absolute certainty the actual historical words of the Buddha. By starting a dialogue between the Indian philosopher and the postmodern thinker, this work will initiate an exchange between a traditional eastern culture and certain contemporary, western thinking, a juxtaposition that should elicit some interesting contrasts and evoke some striking differences. This approach will fulfil many of the benefits of doing comparative philosophy that have already been discussed.

Some writers trace the term 'postmodernism' to changes in architectural design, and others trace it to the philosophical attitudes expressed in the works of Nietzsche, advocating a reign of frivolity with its return to the artistic, the erotic, and the playful, and to Heidegger with his vision of the end of metaphysics. According to a generally acknowledged leader of postmodern philosophy, Jean-François Lyotard, the grammatical tense of postmodernism is the future perfect, and not the present, because the postmodern writer's work cannot be judged by established criteria. If the future perfect is a correct identifying mark for a postmodern work, such a writer labours without established rules, and rather creates rules of what will have been done. Thus the product of the postmodern writer is an event.[88] From another perspective, Lyotard sees the condition of postmodernism as a crisis of narratives, the quintessential form of knowledge: 'Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable.'[89] How did this crisis emerge? After societies entered the post-industrial age and cultures

emerged in the postmodern period, the status of knowledge, which includes scientific, narrative, and basic competence, was altered in such a way that it became a commodity to be produced in order to be sold to consumers.[90] If knowledge becomes the major focus of production, this involves major consequences because 'knowledge ceases to be an end in itself, it loses its "use-value".'[91] Not all postmodern thinkers would define the period as does Lyotard, which suggests a variety of viewpoints. Andreas Huyssen, for instance, views postmodernism as a transformation in western culture.[92]

In order to represent the variety of postmodern thinking as suggested by the works of Lyotard and Huyssen, just as we have for Indian philosophy, we will discuss the thought of many of the following thinkers where it is appropriate: Lyotard, Emmanuel Levinas, Gilles Deleuze, Fredric Jameson, Maurice Blanchot, Edmond Jabès, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, George Bataille, and Michel Foucault. These particular figures have been chosen because they represent the most influential voices within postmodernism. We will create a dialogue between the various Indian and postmodern thinkers on issues such as language and writing, desire, suffering and abjection, self, reality, being, and otherness. These topics have important implications for the place of rationality in Indian philosophy and in postmodern thinking, in the sense that rationality is expressed in language and writing, by a self for others, within a life-context that includes desire, suffering, abjection, and death.

Besides these numerous topics for discussion, another purpose of this work is to demonstrate, by means of the hermeneutical dialogue between selected Indian thinkers and certain postmodern philosophers, that Indian philosophy is not a moribund relic of an ancient epoch that should be confined to a museum of ideas. This work also intends to show the vital role that classical Indian philosophy can play in contemporary philosophical discussions. Thus, a fundamental presupposition of this endeavour, which I think will become evident as the hermeneutical dialogue unfolds, is that Indian philosophy is not irrelevant in the so-called postmodern world and continues to have enduring intellectual value. And it will become apparent that Indian philosophy can assist us in understanding some problems associated with postmodern philosophy.

ENDNOTES

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23. Ibid., p. 199. Jonathan Z. Smith also stresses the importance of differences, but he finds the use of comparison problematic in his two works: *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982) and *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990). Smith thinks that comparison is impressionistic, a matter of memory, does not necessarily inform us about how things are, and is a disciplined exaggeration in the pursuit of knowledge.

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25. Ibid., p. 174.

26. Theodor Schieder, *Geschichte als Wissenschaft: Eine Einführung* (Wien: R. Oldenbourg *München*, 1965), p. 199ff.

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29. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Eighth Printing (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1990), p. 173.

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32. David Tracy, *Dialogue with the Other: The Inter-Religious Dialogue*, Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs 1 (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1990), p. 73.

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34. Edmond Jabès, *The Book of Questions*, Vol. I (Three volumes in one), trans. Rosmarie Waldrop (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1991), p. 301.

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38. Krishna, p. 79.

39. Potter, pp. 32–3.

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42. John Grimes, *An Advaita Vedanta Perspective on Language*, Studies in Indian Tradition No. 3 (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publication, 1991), p. 47.

43. Eliot Deutsch, *Creative Being: The Crafting of Person and World* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992).

44. Graham Parkes, 'Introduction', in *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, ed. Graham Parkes (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), p. 3.

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57. Ibid., p. 93.
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59. Ibid., p. 47.
60. Said, *Orientalism*, p. 25.
61. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), p. 27; *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon and trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p. 59.
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72. Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 2.
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90. Ibid., p. 3.
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92. Andreas Huyssen, 'Mapping the Postmodern', *New German Critique*, Vol. 33 (1984), p. 8. See also his historical article entitled 'The Search for Tradition: Avant Garde and Postmodernism in the 1970s', *New German Critique*, Vol. 22 (1981), pp. 23–40.



2 Language and Writing

In his own idiosyncratic way, Derrida discusses the origin of language in his works by tracing its beginnings to the notion of *klang* (ringing) in Hegel at the origin of language.[1] The path to the origin of language is impassable because it is on the border between speech and klang where a cinder burns that bears the traces of itself. Although possessing the spark of fire, this spark is rather inaccessible and not very useful. Because it possesses some warmth, it does have a twofold potential: it can cause a conflagration or it can become cool and turn into ash. By using the image of the cinder, Derrida wants to suggest there is still something burning within language, a spark of fire that still burns at the origin of language. But like the fragile cinder that can cool, turn into ash, become dust, crumble apart, and eventually disperse, language is also delicate and needs to be nurtured because it does not have a proper name, and yet it brings everything into presence and sustains it. Even if the cinder preserves itself in order to eventually doom itself to dissolution and nothingness, it is still paradoxically there: 'Cinder remains, cinder there is, which we can translate: the cinder is not, is not what is.'[2] The fire that was only potential in the beginning incinerates the definite article and 'leaves the cinder itself in cinder. It disperses it and thereby [*par là*] preserves it, preserves her, in an instant.'[3] For Derrida, the cinder, a figurative

way of writing about language and its origin, is the best paradigm for the trace: 'The name "cinder" is still a cinder of the cinder itself.'[4]

The Indian tradition discusses language in a much less paradoxical way then that of Derrida. In the formative Vedic texts of Indian culture, *Vāc* (speech, word, and by extension, language) is a creative force that acts as the inner power and essence of things.[5] Replying to a rhetorical question about its location, the Vedic poet answers that Vāc abides in the highest heaven, and that it is the firstborn of truth (RV 1.164.35,37). Vāc consists of four quarters, which only the wise truly know, because three of the quarters are concealed from the vast majority of people who can speak only the fourth quarter (RV 1.164.45). Language is a fundamental mystery in the Vedic texts that is located at the very core of reality, and its mysterious nature is not unravelled when other hymns directly identify it with the divine (RV 5.10.2; 10.114.8) or even revelation (*śruti*, RV 10.71.1). The creative, nourishing, and life-sustaining features of Vāc are made lucid when she is referred to as a cow (RV 8.100.10–11).

By using the metaphor of the cow, the Vedic poets begin a process of feminization that is continued by later poets who refer to Vāc as the ancestral Queen, firstborn, and connecting link that gives life to all beings and unites them with each other (AV 4.1.1–3). As the feminine principle, Vāc is the womb (AB 2.38) and support of the entire cosmos (TB 2.8.4), and she is the mother of the sacred Vedic texts, first born of truth, and the centre of immortality (TB 2.8.8.5). Due to her ability to seduce others and to attract *soma* (drink of immortality), the gods send Vāc to retrieve the soma discovered near the abode of the Gandharvas, celestial begins with a reputed weakness for comely women, by instructing her to use her seductive powers (ŚB 3.3.4.3). In the other ritualistic texts, Vāc is identified with Brahman (ŚB 2.1.4.10) and the deity Prajāpati (ŚB 5.1.5.6), but it is implied that she is inferior to the mind, which Prajāpati declares in one episode to be superior because the word can only imitate and follow that already conceived by the mind (TS 2.5.11.4; ŚB 1.4.5.8–12), although both are needed to convey the sacrifice to the gods (ŚB 1.4.4.1). Within the context of a game between the gods and demonic forces, the gods win by choosing

the truth in Vāc, while the demons choose what is false (ŚB 9.5.1.2). This story is indicative of the power of Vāc to express truth or falsehood. In another story the gods keep for themselves the three, sacred, truthful parts of Vāc—the sacred exclamations *bhur, bhuvar,* and *svar*—and human beings are given the fourth part of Vāc, which contains all lies and falsehoods (KS 6.7).

The Upaniṣadic texts tend to reinforce the notions that are associated with Vāc, who is, for instance, referred to as a cow that gives the milk of speech (BĀU 5.8.1; ChU 1.3.7). The *Upaniṣads* continue the identification of Vāc with Brahman, the highest reality (BĀU 4.1.2), which becomes itself the great mystery, essence and inner power of things. Due to Vāc's identification with the highest reality, Upaniṣadic philosophers think that language possesses the ability to transform one's consciousness. Vāc is discussed, for instance, as the seed mantra (sacred formula) that is identical with the cosmos (ChU 1.13.1–3). In fact, all speech is united by the power of the mantra (ChU 2.23.3), which can be totally meaningless or symbolize everything, depending on which scholar one believes is right on the topic.[6] If the earlier *Vedas* focused on the creative aspects of Vāc, the *Upaniṣads* enable us to see its salvific possibilities. Overall, the various symbolic speculations and metaphorical expressions in Indian sacred texts make clear not only the importance of Vāc, but they also stress her various cosmic, divine, ritualistic, and human correspondences, which points to the significance of the symbolic meaning of certain words or syllables and the creative power of language.

During this early period of Indian cultural history, there was a strong emphasis on the oral nature of language, which is its most sacred, vital, creative, and powerful form. During the period of the composition of the Vedic hymns, often conceived as authorless and eternal, and the Brahmanical texts that developed the ritual cult, language thrived within a ritualistic context. This type of context for language helps us to understand that it was intended to accomplish something and not simply directed to name something.[7] With this emphasis on and preference for the oral side of language, the human activities of hearing and memory grow in importance for Indians. The significance of auditory powers for the individual and the stress

placed upon the oral transmission of the sacred, revealed (śruti) literature tended to lessen the significance of writing for Indians. Since texts were ideally to be committed to memory, the written word assumed a secondary importance as a possible heuristic aid for those with dull powers of retention. Within the Indian cultural context, Vāc precedes writing cosmically, anthropologically, and historically, a position that is not shared by many postmodern thinkers, as we will see later in this chapter.[8]

The remainder of this chapter will compare the conceptions of language in the works of Nikāya Buddhism, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Abhinavagupta with Derrida as a representative of postmodern thinking on the nature of language. Because of its importance to the spiritual path of the world-renouncer, we will also discuss the significance of the mantra. Finally, we will consider the Indian cultural attitude toward writing and compare it with some postmodern perspectives.

NIKĀYA BUDDHISM AND DERRIDA

Unlike the early Hindu Vedic literature and its conception of the word (Vāc), Nikāya Buddhists did not accept the divine nature of words, which the monks thought were ordinary creations of human beings to be used for practical purposes of communication. Since words have no intrinsic worth or metaphysical grounding in a supreme power or entity, they are only valuable in an instrumental way in order to accomplish something.[9] The nature of language in Nikāya Buddhism is ambiguous because it is subject to the cycle of temporal and causational flux like everything else in existence, which implies that it cannot have any permanent or enduring nature. Words and any conceptions that they may form are thus not absolute nor are they entirely arbitrary.[10] If words are impermanent and nonabsolute, it is impossible for language to have an enduring structure, although it is possible for there to be a kinship among words based on their usage.[11] Due to its place within the cycle of causation, language is imperfect like everything else, and cannot be expected to express any absolute truth.

Derrida and the Nikāya Buddhists agree that language is impermanent due to its temporal nature, which for the former suggests the temporalization of language that he understands

as a form of play: 'Languages are sown. And they themselves pass from one season to another.'[12] Derrida also agrees with the Buddhists that language possesses no lasting structure. But he does not think that it is due to the impermanent and temporal nature of all finite things caught in an endless chain of causation. Derrida locates the lack of structure for language within its very nature. Within language itself, there exists a supplementary structure, which moves away from an orientated structure and toward disorientation.[13] As a supplement, language adds to itself only to be replaced. The supplement, neither a presence nor an absence, is also alien and exterior to that which it replaces: 'The supplement is always the supplement of a supplement.'[14] Thus the supplement possesses no essentiality, a position the Buddhists could embrace to a large degree because of the impermanent nature of all things. Due to its supplementary nature, language is intrinsically limited. And due to the limits of language, structure should be conceived as subject to erasure. This suggests that we cannot speak of language as such. Its limited and supplementary characteristics indicate, as the Nikāya Buddhists affirm, that language can never embody or express absolute truth.

Although no absolute truth can be expressed in language, the word or doctrine (*dhamma*) of the Buddha is embodied within its literature, according to the Nikāya Buddhists. Unlike ordinary language, the unique, supreme word of the Buddha, possessing its own structure and logic, is not in a state of bondage and an interpreter can grasp its meaning.[15] A highly respected Buddhist scholar explains that, 'The meaning is single and invariable, while the letter is multiple and infinitely variable.'[16] This does not imply that the Nikāya Buddhists accepted the word of the Buddha as a means to liberation because the monks were encouraged to experience the validity of the teachings for themselves. If the teachings accorded with the experience of the monk, the words of the Buddha could then be accepted as authoritative and truthful: 'Monks, this *dhamma* is self-realized, timeless, a come-and-see-thing, leading onwards, to be understood individually by the wise.'[17] The words of the Buddha are important as a guide, but the individual is encouraged to test the words with his/her own experience. While on his deathbed, the Buddha says to his trusted disciple Ānanda: 'Be ye a refuge to

yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge. Hold fast to the Truth as a lamp. Hold fast as a refuge to the Truth. Look not for refuge to any one besides yourselves.'[18] Besides acceding to the dhamma (teaching) of the Buddha based on his earthly utterances while alive, the early Buddhist community also accepted the *vinaya* (monastic regulations) as the words of the historical figure.[19] The word of the Buddha becomes a formal category over time that 'did not necessarily imply the Buddha actually spoke these words but only that they conformed in some way to what were taken to be the basic lines of his teachings.'[20] The special nature of the words or teachings (dhamma) of the historical Buddha is made absolutely clear by Buddhaghoṣa, the erudite Buddhist commentator and philosopher, when he claims that the dhamma possesses meaning and intention.[21]

From Derrida's perspective, when the word of the Buddha becomes a text, it is transformed into an independent entity that possesses textuality of its own. As an independent entity, the text embodying the word of the Buddha becomes independent of the historical Buddha and the early monk scribes and reciters. Since the text is composed of a series of signs that are in varied relationship to each other and play against each other, there is no possibility of its having a stable meaning. For Derrida, the readers of a Buddhist text become the authors of the work, a phenomenon that makes the reader instrumental in the myriad meanings of a text. Not only can the reader discover the range of meanings of a text; it is also possible for the reader to produce meanings in the text.

Even though the word of the Buddha can serve as a guide to liberation from the cycle of life and death that one puts to a personal experiential test, speaking certain forms of language can keep one in a state of bondage. Such forms of speech as harsh, frivolous chatter, lying, slander, or gossip are all characterized as wrong uses of speech.[22] As part of the path to liberation, an aspirant is encouraged to practise right speech which is twofold: it is meritorious, and it stops the cycle of rebirth.[23] Right speech means to abstain from all the wrongful kinds of speech—to not only speak the truth, but also to become aware of how often one deviates from the truth. The kind of language that we use is indicative of our character. But correcting our language can also be a lever for changing our character.

We have already mentioned the importance of the oral nature of the Indian tradition, a characteristic that continued long after the composition of texts. We have also noticed the embodiment of the dhamma (teaching) of the Buddha within the monastic texts that preserved the meaning and intention of the teaching. It is as if the Buddha, by means of his verbal teachings preserved by monks, signed his name into the texts, a procedure that causes the author to lose his identity and even ownership of the text. This type of scenario leads Derrida to provocatively claim that there is nothing outside of the text. Even though the historical Buddha or any early Buddhist monks did not sign their names to any texts, Derrida wants to claim that an author signs his/her name both inside and outside of a text in a continual process of signing. This suggests that signing is a twofold process because the author signs his/her name to the title page and also in the interior of the text by what is written inside the book: 'Hence the signature has to remain and disappear at the same time, remain in order to disappear, or disappear in order to remain.'[24] A consequence of this double type of signing is that any distinction between the author and the text dissolves due to the unconscious and unintentional nature of the act. By signing one's signature on the exterior and by inserting it into the interior of the text, a problem is created by and for the author because 'by inserting it into the body of the text, you monumentalize, institute, and erect it into a thing or a stony object. But in doing so, you also lose the identity, the title of ownership over the text: You let it become a moment or a part of the text, as a thing or a common noun.'[25]

Derrida's theory of signature does not appear to work that well when applied to a culture with a strong oral tradition. Neither the Buddha nor the monks truly signed the outside of the texts until much later in the history of the movement when individual monks authored texts. By not signing their signatures on the outside of the texts, the teaching of the Buddha remained alive from Derrida's perspective, even though the Buddhists signed the interior of the text strictly by writing in it. It did not become an objective monument or tomb. From Derrida's viewpoint, the dhamma of the Buddha represents a danger because his word assumes a kind of authority and sacredness in the tradition and possesses the potential to become a metaphysical entity, which is something that the postmodernist is attempting to avoid as he tries to overcome already existing metaphysics.

There is a connection between the signature of an author and time, which implies the actual absence of the signer for Derrida. The signature of an author marks and retains the author's past presence in a past now or present which will remain a future now or present.[26] Since, as far as we know, the historical Buddha did not write anything or sign his name to any text, the Buddha was thus never present to become absent, although Buddhists would claim that he is present now by means of his teachings whenever they are read or heard by others.

ŚAṄKARA AND ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

Not entirely unlike the early Buddhists, Śaṅkara's philosophical attitude toward language is ambivalent because he is suspicious of language, both an instrument of ignorance and a means of liberation. As a product of ignorance (*avidyā*), language distorts any insight into reality that we might have as we search for our true self by obstructing and distracting our mental processes. Language is also a phenomenon in the realm of *māyā* (illusory existence), which implies that it is ultimately unreal. Coward thinks that Śaṅkara and Derrida agree that 'the conceptual oppositions that make up language are the obstacles that get in our way of the experience of the real.'[27] Coward's observation is accurate for Śaṅkara, but it misses the mark for Derrida because the postmodern philosopher does not want to make distinctions between real and unreal, reality and appearance. Derrida's method of deconstructing language reveals what is already there. Moreover, deconstruction is intended to destroy all significations that have their origin in the *logos*.[28] Yet this method also functions as a mime, which alludes to nothing and reflects no reality. In its mode as mime, deconstruction produces mere reality-effects. To imply that Derrida is concerned to find reality, as Coward does, attributes to him a logocentric or a metaphysical position, which is a philosophical standpoint that he is attempting to undo in western thought.

Although language is a product of ignorance, it also plays a part in the path to liberation for Śaṅkara, especially by an individual meditating on and reciting language in the form of the

mantra (sacred formula) *OM:* 'For though *OM* is a mere word, it becomes a means for the attainment of the supreme Brahman...'[29] Śaṅkara also stresses the importance of the great sayings (*mahāvākyas*) of the Upaniṣads (e.g., *Tat tvam asi*, That thou are), even though they have no pragmatic meaning or lead anywhere. The great sayings help to focus one's attention on the eternal self (*Ātman*). By their ability to shift one's focus from the ephemeral to the eternal, the great sayings suggest an evocative function of language operative for Śaṅkara.[30] Moreover, language can reveal knowledge.

The use of mantras and great sayings, for Śaṅkara, suggests their mental or verbal repetition for purposes of concentration and meditation. From Derrida's perspective, the inherent repetitive nature of these forms of language do not enhance our chances for focusing on the eternal self because they are more likely to manifest perversion and subversion, unlimited powers carried by repetition.[31] Repetition is a feature of what Derrida calls iteration, which alters, blurs, undermines, and dislocates an utterance and thereby creates something new. Whatever the intention of an utterance by a speaker it will never become present to itself or its content because the iteration structuring it introduces a dehiscence, a divided opening and limit, and a cleft into the utterance.[32] Derrida's notion of iteration represents a disruptive feature of language that reveals constant change. This suggests that the sounds of the mantras and the terms of the great sayings cannot be controlled by the speaker.

The knowledge revealed by language is grounded in the sacred Vedic texts, a valid form of knowledge for Śaṅkara, which are ultimately based in Brahman, the ultimate reality itself and source of revealed literature.[33] Śaṅkara refers to revealed scripture, for instance, to prove that the soul is eternal, is without origin, is unchanging, is constituted by the unmodified Brahman, and is identical with Brahman,[34] or he proves by means of scripture and inference that the soul is atomic in size.[35] There is no doubt that Śaṅkara is convinced tnat śruti (revelation) is infallible and that we must rely on it as a primary source of knowledge, a philosophical position that leads to a denial of the validity of other types of knowledge.

Rather than being grounded in a sacred scripture and revealing knowledge, language is impermanent and disseminates for Derrida. Language possesses no lasting structure for Derrida because it embodies a supplementary feature, embodying neither a presence nor an absence that necessarily moves towards disorientation.[36] By spilling in advance, dissemination is affirmative in the sense that it acknowledges an 'always already divided generation of meaning.'[37] This feature of language makes it impossible to return to or to readjust the unity of meaning. Dissemination leaves us with a trace, an addition whose markings are lost. Derrida and Śaṅkara do agree, however, that language gives one something to think about, whereas they disagree when Derrida claims that language steals from us by appropriating our thoughts even prior to the moment of our consideration of them.[38]

In his comparative study of Śaṅkara and Derrida, Coward thinks that both philosophers perceive language as a practical goal for self-realization, even though this realization is very different in each thinker: 'For Śaṅkara it requires the total transcending of language, whereas for Derrida it is found in the prophetic call for action that comes to us from the very midst of language itself.'[39] I would agree with Coward's characterization of Śaṅkara, but I think that it is misleading to write about the possibility of self-realization within language for Derrida because of the questionable existence of the self in his philosophy. At the very least, Derrida is opposed to any metaphysical conception of the self. And if one presupposes that the self represents the centre of human existence, Derrida wants to make it clear that there is no such centre.[40] Since a centre to human existence is contradictory and impermanent, human beings are condemned to live on the edge of life. Furthermore, self-realization suggests that one could find the truth of some sort. However, in Derrida's philosophy truth is plural, and his own philosophical works are prefatory to the truth because none of them discloses the full truth.

From a scholarly perspective, the subject matter of revelation can be distinguished into words and sentences. The philosophical opponents of Śaṅkara claim that the nature of a word can be traced to the concept of *sphoṭa* (symbol), a position that the Vedānta philosopher rejects because it assumes that letters are eternal, whereas sphoṭa represents an inner unity within the philosophy of the grammarian Bhartṛhari's theory of language

that cause the word and its spoken sounds (*dhvani*) to convey meaning, accounting for the unity and differentiation in language. Not only do letters differ according to the pronunciation of a given speaker for Śaṅkara, the letters perish when they are actually pronounced and thus cannot be eternal in any sense. Derrida agrees with Śaṅkara to a certain extent about the non-eternal nature of letters, although not for the same reasons, because the former thinks that every sign presupposes an undetermined absence.[41] If one argues that one can grasp the sense of a word from the letters, Śaṅkara maintains that a single letter does not convey the sense of a word because letters succeed one another in time and 'an apprehension of the last letter combined with the impressions produce by the preceding letters does not actually take place, because those impressions are not objects of perception.'[42] From Śaṅkara's perspective, his opponents also disregard other evidence given by perception and must assume a theory of signs that is never perceived.[43] The reason that his opponents cannot perceive the true nature of words is that a word, like 'cow', for example, denotes a particular kind of animal with an origin, whereas the same word also denotes a species that does not have an origin: 'Now it is with the species that the words are connected, not with the individuals, which, as being infinite in number, are not capable of entering into that connection. Hence, although the individuals do not originate, no contradiction arises in the case of words such as cow, and the like, since the species are eternal.'[44] Based on sound scriptural evidence, we can know by means of perception and inference that words, which are primarily connected to species, precede particular things.

In contrast to Śaṅkara, Derrida views the denotative power of words much differently because there is nothing itself to which a sign can point. An interpretative dimension supplied by human action always mediates a sign, a supplement of a thing itself, and its signified. The sign always remains exterior and alien because it adds to itself, forming a surplus that replaces or insinuates itself in the place of a signified. Thus Derrida's notion of the sign, a mark that subsists, renders it impossible for it to precede particulars as it does for Śaṅkara. Moreover, any context species, or genre cannot enclose Derrida's notion of sign because its inherent force of rupture is connected to spacing, which separates it from other elements of a context and either objective or subjective present reference.[45]

Unlike Derrida, Śaṅkara suggests that the primary meaning of a word be represented by its class characteristics, whereas its secondary meaning is referred to as *laksanā* because of its metaphorical or contextual use.[46] This secondary meaning is not, however, totally independent of the primary meaning of a word.[47] A good example is given by Śaṅkara: 'By the word *asat* is meant the unconditioned Brahman as contrasted with the state in which distinctions of name and form become manifested.'[48] This suggests that a word means something independently and points to or indicates an entity. Śaṅkara develops his position by making a distinction between the literal meaning (*vācyārtha*) and the signified meaning (*laksyārtha*). Therefore, words can convey single or multiple ideas that include such notions as class, quality, relation or action. Derrida disagrees with the Vedānta philosopher on a couple of vital points. Contrary to Śaṅkara, Derrida does not think that a context can ever be absolutely determined.[49] From Derrida's perspective, metaphor uses natural languages as philosophical language, which makes metaphor what Derrida calls *exergue* (literally meaning outside of the work) like a space on a coin or medal that is reserved for an inscription that suggests a dissemination of its meanings or elements—coin inscription, space, epigraph, and outside.[50] Derrida's point is that a metaphor cannot deliver all that it promises. A metaphor, an elliptical comparison or redoubling, is always plural, syntactical, gets carried away with itself, must erase itself to become what it is, and is always engaged in self-destruction.[51] And most importantly for Derrida, a metaphor is a metaphysical concept that attempts to present a total view, but any such attempt it fruitless from Derrida's viewpoint.[52]

By knowing the meaning of words, one can know the meaning of a sentence according to Śaṅkara.[53] Rambachan's comments accurately depict Śaṅkara's position: 'Śaṅkara does not accept that sentences cannot have a factual referent of significance. He points out that even though a sentence might have its ultimate purport in initiating some activity, it does not thereby cease to communicate valid factual information.'[54] The Veda does not have a fixed rule that in a sentence a particular word should

have a certain place within the structure of the sentence. Thus the syntactical relation to words is based on their meanings.[55] If one cannot know the meaning of a sentence unless one knows the meaning of the words that constitute the sentence, how precisely can the meanings of words be recalled? Śaṅkara describes a logical process that enables one upon hearing the word in a sentence to recollect them, to discriminate between the words, and to ascertain their meanings.[56] Possessing not only meaning, sentences can also give one either indirect or direct knowledge of the Ātman (ultimate self). From sentences referring to things other than Ātman, there comes indirect knowledge, whereas direct knowledge arises from a sentence that refers to the inner self.[57] This type of claim is made by Śaṅkara because he is convinced that there is a reality behind the sentences and words that supports and sustains them. From another perspective, a particular sentence or group of them is syntactically incomplete because meaning is always whole for Śaṅkara. To claim that there is a reality behind the words and sentences is too metaphysical a position for Derrida. Moreover, Derrida's notions of dissemination and supplement within his understanding of language render it impossible for there to be any certainly with respect to meaning. In contrast to Śaṅkara, Derrida makes it clear that meaning is devoid of any metaphysical support: 'Meaning must await being said or written in order to inhabit itself, and in order to become, by differing from itself, what it is: meaning.'[58]

For a sentence to be intelligible for Śaṅkara, it must meet four conditions: mutual expectancy among the words to serve as reciprocal complements to each other; common consistency in meaning; reciprocal contiguity; and appropriateness for the context.[59] Even if a sentence meets these basic criteria, no sentence that makes a statement about a given object within the world can be absolutely trusted to express a complete meaning. Śaṅkara and Derrida agree that there cannot be complete meaning within the world, and they agree on the importance of appropriate context for grasping the intelligibility of a sentence, although one can imagine Śaṅkara criticizing Derrida for his use of deconstruction and the lack of attention that it pays to the intention of an author. With the exception of the revealed and eternal Vedas, Śaṅkara is suspicious of language because

it possesses the ability to obstruct and falsify reality and cannot be trusted to convey the truth, a position that is sympathetic to Derrida's grasp of language. As we have noted, language cannot convey the uniqueness of a particular thing for Śaṅkara because it can only present the species or general characteristics of a thing. Moreover, language can never represent the essence of something because it can only convey the surface appearance of something and not its own essential nature. When a sentence gives us information about something and we accept it and form a concept as part of our process of knowing, what we are doing is forming unreal concepts in our intellects that have no basis in reality. To form judgments about particular things based on our combining the unreal with the real is called the process of *adhyāsa* (superimposition), which is directly caused by avidyā (ignorance) resulting in a kind of psychological illusion within the person.[60]

Because Śaṅkara is generally opposed to reason as a means of overcoming this type of psychological illusion, he advocates direct intuition (*anubhava*) of the truth, which is free from the limitations of reason and language.[61] In contrast, Derrida advocates a method of deconstruction, which he claims is not a method and cannot be transformed into one and that is exorbitant by definition because it implies being outside and exceeding the track.[62] By exceeding the track, this non-method also involves crossing it, which necessarily implies a crossing it out in crossing it. In other words, there is a double sense of crossing: a breaking through and a violation, a double-cross. This exorbitant method of deconstruction means going beyond what is reasonable, just, or proper by undermining the propriety of reason.

In his study, Coward perceives a teleology in Derrida's work that he connects to the arche-trace which contains within itself all the possibilities of manifestation as primordial difference: 'This "difference" is the inherent teleological force within us that leads to self-manifestation.'[63] Coward stresses the temporal becoming of the trace: 'Within this becoming, the teleological is but one moment in the total movement of the trace.'[64] The major problem with this interpretation is that it attributes something—teleology in this instance—to the philosophy of Derrida that does not accurately fit the case. In contrast, there is a clear

telos in Śaṅkara's philosophical system, which culminates in union with Brahman. But the process of becoming in Derrida never ends, which makes Coward's interpretation of a teleology in Derrida's philosophy an untenable position. Moreover, Derrida informs his reader that he is opposed to any conception of a telos for, at least, three reasons. The first major problem with the concept or telos for Derrida is that it contains the notion of presence.[65] By means of his method of deconstruction, Derrida tries to oppose the metaphysical or teleological authority of meaning.[66] Thirdly, teleology implies ontology, which suggests metaphysics and presence for Derrida.[67] For these reasons, it is a mistake to attribute teleology to Derrida, a major distinction between his philosophy and the thought of Śaṅkara that we will develop more fully in future chapters.

RĀMĀNUJA AND VIŚIṢṬĀDVAITA

The words, sentences, and sounds of the sacred *Vedas* or revelation have always existed as a transcendent deposit of truth, and are an accurate reproduction in the earthly realm of an eternal existent. The *Vedas* have no author and exist eternally in the mind of Brahman, the source of the *Vedas*, and all existence and the final goal of all things. Even though the *Vedas* are grounded in the essence of ultimate reality and not in the will of Brahman, the eternity of the *Vedas* corresponds directly with the eternal nature of Brahman and is compatible with the impersonal aspect of reality.[68] But from another perspective, the Vedas are, however, personal in the sense that they are directed to the heart and mind of every individual by a speaker using ordinary language, which does not have the inherent authoritative and liberating power of the eternal scriptures, to convey the message of revealed scripture, a position that reflects the devotional nature of Rāmānuja's philosophical theology.

Rāmānuja accepted epistemologically three valid sources of knowledge (*pramānas*): perception; inference; and the word (language) as a form testimony. The word possesses the ability to denote: '...we conclude that the power of denotation is inherent in the word itself.'[69] Moreover, the meaning of a word is connected with the thing denoted.[70] To use Rāmānuja's example—that there is a cottage on the Ganges River—is to affirm a direct connection between a physical object (the cottage) and its location (on the Ganges). The natural denotative nature of words is evident in everyday life when parents teach a child how to speak by pointing to objects and naming them until the child eventually makes the necessary connection between the objects and their names. Along with this type of instruction, parents also teach the proper meaning of words and their correct combinations to their children. From this type of empirical observation, Rāmānuja concludes that 'Hence follows that the insistence upon words having meaning only for *things to do* is baseless.'[71] This position suggests a few conclusions. It suggests that a word that names an object possesses a preestablished referential character to that particular object, words have inherent meanings and a word cannot make sense without its objective referent because words are innately connected to their objects. Thus the term 'cow' refers, for example, directly to the bovine species and denotes all particular cows based on the generic animal. Rāmānuja also wants to assert that language is intended to assert facts or describe a given situation. Language is not intended to enjoin us to action due to its alleged prescriptive nature.

By naming an object, for Derrida, we distinguish it from something else. Since we tend to think in names, we are able to dispense with image and sensory experience. To name something is to separate it from other objects, to be other. But the name of something is not irreducible because a name does not have a position of privilege: 'It is a relative unity, made to stand out between larger or smaller unites.'[72] Derrida wants us to see what language does rather than how it represents things. When language bestows a name upon an object, it installs itself and destroys the purity of the idiom by not acknowledging the other as pure other. In the process of naming objects, there occurs a radical dislocation of things that tend to get reorganized into an impure idiom. For Derrida, the naming of a thing simultaneously involves its erasure within a process that he calls arche-writing, a play of différance. Derrida explains the process:

It is because the proper names are already no longer proper names, because their production is their obliteration, because the erasure and the imposition of the letter are originary, because they do not supervene

upon a proper inscription; it is because the proper name has never been, as the unique appellation reserved for the presence of a unique being, anything but the original myth of a transparent legibility present under the obliteration; it is because the proper name was never possible except through its functioning within a classification and therefore within a system of differences, within a writing retaining the traces of difference, that the interdict was possible, could come into play, and, when the time came, as we shall see, could be transgressed; transgressed, that is to say restored to the obliteration and the non-self-sameness [*non-propriété*] at the origin.[73]

If this is the case, Rāmānuja's response to Derrida revolves around the fact that one cannot be certain about any object and the naming of that object. Derrida objects to the conceptualization of a thing when we name it and the priority given to the concept over the act of naming and to the name itself because the range of reference of a term depends on its place within a system of difference. Therefore, the referential nature of a term is simultaneously made possible and delimited by the space that it occupies within a sphere of difference.

From Rāmānuja's perspective, Derrida's grasp of how knowledge and language are related misses the important role of trust. Matilal stresses the importance of trust in Indian philosophy:

When the teacher in the classroom or the author of a standard textbook says that the earth is round, we accept it on *trust* which is implicit in such transmission of knowledge through words. Knowledge of the words themselves may be perceptual but the knowledge *derived from* these words is neither perceptual nor inferential. Words plus trust generates knowledge directly.[74]

There is no trust in the Indian sense in postmodern theory. Using Derrida as a prime example, there is only a radical skepticism and an attempt to lead us astray by making us unsure about who is addressing what to whom.

If we can agree that a word is a sign, Derrida cannot accept that a word possesses intrinsic denotative power because there is nothing itself to which a sign can point. The sign and its signified are always mediated by an interpretative dimension furnished by human action. Therefore, a sign is a representation of a previously interpreted foundation of knowledge. A sign is

always the supplement of the thing itself. In other words, the sign adds itself, forming a surplus. Why does the sign add itself? It does so only to replace or to insinuate itself in-the-place-of a signified. But to that, which it replaces, the sign is always exterior and alien. By means of his philosophy of language, Rāmānuja suggests that one can get to the source of anything. Derrida denies this because there is always supplement at the source. Being without essentiality, a supplement may or may not occur; it is thus neither a presence not an absence: 'The supplement is always the supplement of a supplement.'[75] From Derrida's perspective, this is all possible within the realm of the play of différance.

It we recall the example of parents teaching their children the names of objects that Rāmānuja uses to support his argument, this type of illustration suggests that a sign is an event, a position that is denied by Derrida. He explains, 'A sign is never an event, if by event we mean an irreplaceable and irreversible empirical particular.'[76] Rāmānuja and Derrida also differ over whether or not one can correctly call a thing an object. In response to the Indian philosopher, Derrida argues that a thing is neither an object nor a subject.[77] The thing cannot be discussed either objectively or subjectively because it represents the other and its own intrinsic law demands the impossible:

Thus the thing would be the other, the other-thing which gives me an order or addresses an impossible, intransigent, insatiable demand to me, without an exchange and without a transaction, without a possible contract. Without a word, without speaking to me, it addresses itself to me, to me alone in my irreplaceable singularity, in my solitude as well. I owe to the thing an absolute respect, which no general law would mediate: the law of the thing is singularity and difference as well.[78]

From Derrida's position, it is incorrect to use a word to describe a thing because both a 'Word and thing are referential limits that only the supplementary structure can produce and mark.'[79]

Rāmānuja replies to thinkers like Derrida in the following manner: 'Consequently, from the fact that language can be understood to have the power of denoting an object that is established it follows that all the words of the *Vedānta* do denote Brahman, the cause of the Universe the possessor of all

perfections...'[80] This quotation suggests that all language, as possessing an inherent ability to assert given facts, affirms the real, which implies that words do not simply denote objects within the empirical world. Words rather point beyond themselves to their fundamental basis in Brahman, the goal and termination point of all sacred scripture. We are normally unaware of the significance and power of language in our daily lives because of our ignorance.

From Derrida's philosophical viewpoint, Rāmānuja's emphasis on the denoting power of language and its alleged ability to point beyond itself to the real is misguided and misfocused because the Indian thinker fails to look at the spaces between words and to ask himself what possible significance those spaces might have for understanding the nature of language. The spacing between words is a pause, a break, a blank, and an interval, which forms the origin of signification. To discuss spacing suggests referring to space and time, which are continually becoming in the sense of the becoming-space of time and the becoming-time of space. Being at the limits of phenomenology from Derridas's viewpoint, this spacing in process 'is always unperceived, the nonpresent, and the nonconscious.'[81] With these kinds of characteristics, it is no wonder that Rāmānuja, other Indian thinkers, and western philosophers are unaware of spacing as defined by Derrida. When ordinary thinkers look and concentrate on the space between words they see an empty space, whereas Derrida sees, for instance, a hymen, which always takes place in the 'inter', in the between, in the spacing which is nothing.[82] Part of the problem associated with seeing the hymen is that it never reveals itself in the present.[83]

For Rāmānuja's philosophy of language, it is the words and sentences that are significant and not the empty spaces between the words. Rāmānuja elaborates his position:

> Now a word (*pada*) originates from the combination of a radical element and a suffix, and as these two elements have different meanings it necessarily follows that the word itself can convey only a sense affected with difference. And further, the plurality of words is based on plurality of meanings; the sentence therefore which is an aggregate of words expresses some special combination of things (meanings of words), and hence has no power to denote a thing devoid of all difference.[84]

Rāmānuja wants to make a distinction between the words and sentences of the Vedas or śruti (revelation) and ordinary language that depicts numerous differences. Rāmānuja explains that 'The nature of a word is to signify the peculiar difference of the object to which it corresponds; that of a sentence to signify the peculiar difference of a complex of such differentiated objects.'[85] Even though words and sentences of ordinary language have a tendency to indicate numerous differences, they can also express the oneness of a thing, an impossibility for Derrida. The red, white, and blue colours of a basketball combine a few attributes that qualify a single object. For Rāmānuja, there is no contradiction between a thing being red, white, and blue and its being a basketball: 'We therefore hold to the conclusion that coordinated words denote one thing qualified by the possession of several attributes.'[86] Even though an object might be distinguished by several attributes, it can still remain a unity. Rāmānuja follows this line of argument because he wants to indicate that when all differences have disappeared there still remains undermined, self-illuminating, self-existent, and undifferentiated being of Brahman.[87] This process of argument also suggests the intrinsic inability of everyday language to elucidate and make directly known the undifferentiated Brahman, and it suggests a basic correspondence between the language of the *Veda* and reality. This line of argumentation is totally unacceptable for Derrida because of its logocentric implications.

ABHINAVAGUPTA AND KASHMIR ŚAIVISM

With the exception of the grammarians, none of the Indian philosophers already discussed have devoted as much attention to language than that given by Abhinavagupta, the Kashmir Śaiva philosopher and tantric advocate, whose philosophy tries to defend the integrity and reality of language.[88] The reality of the word is expressed as *Parāvāc*, the primordial, uncreated word, non-dual essence of reality, identical to supreme consciousness or Śiva.[89] It is not to be confused with ordinary language because Parāvāc is the source and potential of all language and everything else. As the source of all language, it functions as the foundation for all meaning in conventional

language. Moreover, there can be no awareness and no knowledge without it.[90] With its connection to the highest form of consciousness, it represents the energy that creates by means of evolving the cosmos from itself and is thus ontologically prior to all speech and thought.[91]

Based on previous discussions of other Indian thinkers, Derrida perceives Abhinavagupta's conception of Parāvāc, a union of primordial word and the consciousness of the single deity and reality, as a blatant form of logocentrism. It is marvellously ironical, coming from a master of irony himself, to read the following statement of Derrida; 'Language begins without us, in us and before us. This is what theology calls God...'[92] Unless this statement is intended by the author to be ironical (and I think this is exactly his intention), Derrida comes very close to deifying language, a position that would bring his philosophy of language in closer harmony with Abhinavagupta. In fact, John D. Caputo argues that Derrida possesses a religion, even though this is not true in any orthodox sense.[93]

Nonetheless, even though the Parāvāc is non-dual for Abhinavagupta, it does have three levels: *paśyanti* (visionary speech); *madhyamā* (intermediate); *vaikhari* (corporeal). The paśyanti stage represents the initial moment of consciousness where there is a desire to know, but there is no true knowing as yet by the individual in this ambiguous transition stage of an initial vision.[94] As it emerges out of the undifferentiation of the previous stage, the Parāvāc gives birth to the intermediate position of madhyamā where language first appears alone with the objective universe. Connecting with time and the full disclosure of language, the third stage (vaikhari) represents the complete manifestation of differentiation, which includes the objective, limited, illusory (māyā) world, a realm of bondage that should make one suspicious of conventional language.

Abhinavagupta also acknowledges three kinds of meaning: conventional (*abhidhā*), secondary (lakṣaṇā) and suggestive (dhvani). By depending on convention that is connected to the general and lacks a specific reference, the first kind of meaning or denotation is a semantic power that conveys meanings of a common nature. The second kind of meaning particularizes the general.[95] The suggestive power or third type of meaning is to be distinguished from the first kind of meaning: 'Denotative power and suggestive power differ in nature and they differ in their objects, which are the word's own meaning and a different meaning respectively.'[96] The basic nature of dhvani (literally meaning sound or resonance) is its suggestive sense that takes precedence over the literal sense, and embodies an evocative kind of meaning that transcends primary denotation and metaphor.[97] But why should the suggestive sense take precedent over the denotative? Abhinavagupta implies that the answer lies in the very nature of dhvani because it represents the essence of poetry and is the cause of beauty.[98] But most important is its connection to *rasa*, an undifferentiated mass of aesthetic delight that is evoked by dhvani.[99] When a person experiences rasa its enjoyment (*bhoga*) becomes a real possibility or can be asserted to be inevitable. This pleasure of relishing rasa with the characteristics of melting, expansion, and radiance, is not produced, for instance, by the words of poetry, but rather, emerges from 'the cessation of that obscuration [of the true nature of the self] which is caused by the thick darkness of ignorance.'[100]

If we accept Heidegger's claim that there is no presuppositionless philosophy, it is not difficult to isolate the basic presupposition of Abhinavagupta's philosophy because thought and language can only be valid and meaningful forms of knowledge and communication when they are grounded in a transcendent absolute. Otherwise, Abhinavagupta's philosophy would lead to a *regressio ad infinitum* without a transcendental foundation. Rather than being grounded in an unconditioned absolute of some kind, Derrida thinks that meaning is something that cannot be discovered because nothing precedes it and nothing controls it. Meaning represents the space between terms, their relations and interrelations. Meaning is best grasped as a function of play.[101]

Another point on which Derrida and Abhinavagupta are at odds is the intentionality of the speaker or writer. Abhinavagupta makes clear his position on intentionality: 'When we hear the words, "Bring the cow," and an intention of the speaker is thereby suggested, a meaning characterized by that particular intention is associated with [i.e. prompts] the activity of bringing the desired object, not intention in general, which would be quite ineffective.'[102] From what we have said about Derrida's

understanding of language, it would appear that he would discard it. According to two of his supportive interpreters, this is not the case because he does not do away with the phenomenological idea of intentionality. When referring to the intentionality of a text, according to Gasché, Derrida inscribes and displaces it within consciousness.[103] Granting that language is intentional, Norris argues that Derrida is interested in a more nuanced understanding of it: 'Language is intentional through and through, but not in the sense that its meaning either could or should be confined to what the author (supposedly) intended.'[104] Derrida's attitude toward intentionality is not unsimilar to Heidegger's notion of retrieve (*Wiederholung*) in which the German philosopher tried to go back and recover *Dasein's* (There-being's) authentic past.[105] For Heidegger, retrieve means not simply a bringing back of a past event, but it also involves a returning of a potentiality previously exploited.

By realizing and experiencing the aesthetic taste of rasa for Abhinavagupta, a person gets a foretaste of the experience of ultimate reality, the non-dual Śiva-Śakti. This suggests that language, which has the tendency to keep us in a state of bondage, binding us within ignorance and suffering by not allowing us to get a complete view of reality, can also become a means to our liberation, a possibility that is suggested by the identity between the highest reality and Pāravāc. The Kashmir Śaiva philosopher must reverse the vibratory evolutionary process and return to the primordial word, and the most efficacious means of accomplishing this reversal of the cosmic emanation by the primordial word is the mantra, which contains the very power (*Śakti*) of the absolute reality. If Abhinavagupta's philosophy begins by being suspicious of language, it ends by using certain forms of language as a means to liberation, involving a transcendence of the empirical world and language itself. In the final phase, the liberated renouncer enters silence, which is the starting point for the emanative movement of the primordial word and the point to which all language returns in the end. Thus silence contains the creative possibilities of the Pāravāc and all language. Derrida finds, of course, this line of argument logocentric.[106] Conversely, Abhinavagupta responds to thinkers like Derrida that it is not possible for him to write about language without a metaphysical foundation.

Before turning to a consideration of the significance of the mantra and writing in the Indian tradition, it is useful to pause to consider briefly some thought about language from two contemporary Indian philosophers: Mohanty and Krishna. Mohanty finds that two Indian philosophical schools that have been considered until now in this chapter have made positive contributions to a theory of language. Mohanty calls attention to the correctness of the Nyāya theory that each word possesses its own particular reference from which the meaning of a sentence is constructed. The Mimāmsā philosophical school is correct to insist that the meaning of a sentence is more than a mere juxtaposition of meaningful parts, but it manifests a unified meaning because of the meaning embodied in each of the component expressions that rely on each other. Although the meanings of words are unrelated in any specific sense, the meanings of words have a general relationship.[107] Words generate linguistic understanding by the subsequent words in a sentence fulfilling their expectations with respect to the preceding terms. According to Mohanty, there are two components to a theory of language that are needed: a theory of sense and consideration of the intention of the speaker or writer. Mohanty thinks that the Nyāya philosophical tradition can be useful at this point by providing a mode of presentation and identification of what is grasped by understanding, which is embodied in its notion of objecthood.[108] Even though we have already called attention to Derrida's problems with determining for certain the intention of a speaker, Mohanty argues for the necessity of determining the intention of the speaker, which a hearer can discover in the utterance itself.[109]

Unlike some of the Hindu philosophers that we have already considered, Daya Krishna argues that language is not intrinsically universal or particular, but it is rather referential or instrumental in character. This means that words have no innate characteristics or meanings.[110] Even though Krishna is closer to the position of Derrida than he is to Mohanty, he does not share Derrida's views about the dynamic and changing nature of language because of the following rationale: 'It only refers to a "state of affairs" which may have the characteristic of a "relative stability" that is practically sufficient for our immediate purposes, or a dynamic, changing character which we may

wish to refer to.'[111] Due to its instrumental nature, language communicates a state of affairs that is experientially present. Therefore, language does not have to be either constantly changing or a static particular in order to communicate a given situation or change. Based on logic, experience, and language, this suggests that an object of knowledge does not necessarily have to be permanent and unchanging, although this could be the case for Krishna.

Mohanty and Daya Krishna also do not follow Derrida when he denies any significant distinction between discourse and reality. If we use the horrific case of genocide to illustrate the problem, thee Indian thinkers suggest that there is a definite difference between discussing and practising genocide. Otherwise, there is a danger of rationalizing such a heinous action.

THE LIBERATING POWER OF THE MANTRA

Due to its ability to serve as an instrument of liberation, the mantra is a unique form of language for the world-renouncer. If we briefly trace its history in ancient India, we will discover some of its inherent features. In the early Vedic literature, the mantra is connected to the primordial word. (Vāc, RV 1.40.6). There is also a direct connection between the mantra and *rta*, the cosmic law that governs the functioning of the universe (RV 1.67.5; 3.53.8). These connections suggest the mantra's embodiment of the truth. Mantras played an important role in the sacrificial cult of the Vedic religion as evident by their being addressed or offered to a god (ŚB 2.3.4.10), they were also recited as ritual offerings were being made (ŚB 4.1.2.19), and priests recited them during other kinds of ritual acts (ŚB 2.6.2.15). Within the ritual context, mantras played a protective function for the ritual itself and the participants from evil forces. They also sanctified and justified the ritual acts. This was possible because of the power possessed by the mantras (AB 5.14.8). A mantra was only effective when it was pronounced, otherwise it would remain powerless (RV 10.95.1). When it is pronounced it is referred to as *kaviśasta*, a term related to revelatory insight that suggests the pre-eminence of the word over the speaker.[112] Since the mantra is also considered sacred, the reciting of a sacred formula is governed by strict rules.

From the philosophical perspective of Derrida, the person uttering a mantra renders it stolen as soon as it is pronounced. Once the mantra is uttered it no longer belongs to either the speaker or the addressee because of the open nature of an utterance. Derrida elucidates his position: 'Speech is stolen: since it is stolen from language it is, then, stolen from itself, that is, from the thief who has always already lost speech as property and initiative.'[113] Furthermore, the person uttering the mantra ceases to be the person who gives utterance to the sacred formula because the speaker discovers that he/she is secondary. Thus speech is both stolen from the speaker and any understanding to which it offers itself. Derrida wants to demonstrate that speech represents absence and not the presence of something sacred implied in the reciting of a mantra, an Indian example of what Derrida identifies as logocentrism in western philosophy. It is very conceivable that Śaṅkara, for instance, could reply to Derrida that his preference for writing over speech also represents a form of absence. If some Indian thinkers suggest that the mantra represents the fullness of speech, Derrida denies that there is any such fullness of speech.

The emphasis on uttering the mantra suggests to scholars that the recited sacred formula is an act, more precisely a speech act. From his scholarly perspective, Gonda explains, 'The spoken word is an act, an exercise of power, revealing an attitude of the speaker and containing something creative.'[114] Along similar lines, another scholar interprets mantras as speech acts because their effectiveness results from their being pronounced a form of performative utterance.[115] In contrast to this position, Staal, playing a role much like Derrida, disagrees that mantras are speech acts because they do not involve intention like speech acts do.[116] Staal's conclusion is formed by his conviction that mantras must be understood in conjunction with their musical character, which helps to explain why they cannot be grasped simply as a form of language.[117] For Staal, mantras are ends in themselves because they do not describe or refer to cosmic entities, many mantras are not recited, and some are recited mentally or in silence.[118]

In the postmodern vogue, Staal's most controversial claim is that mantras are often meaningless, although they do possess

power.[119] Citing Vedic textual evidence, Findly asserts that mantras must have meaning because they have this meaning within a Vedic context.[120] Another scholar disputes Staal by examining the work of Bhartṛhari, the fifth-century systematizer of the Indian Grammarian School: 'The meaningfulness of mantras is not merely intellectual, this meaning has power (*śakti*). Mantras have the power to remove ignorance (*avidyā*), reveal truth (*dharma*), and realize release (mokṣa).'[121] Again, the French scholar Padoux argues, from the results of his extensive study of language in Kashmir Śaivism, against Staal that mantras have symbolic value, meaning, and intentionality as basic features.[122]

Based on what Derrida states about speech theory in his published works, he is opposed to interpreting the mantra as a form of speech act. Not only does Derrida accuse J. L. Austin and John R. Searle, who develops Austin's theory of speech acts, of engaging in metaphysics, but he is also critical of speech act theory because the intentionality of the utterance cannot become present to itself or its content due to the iteration structuring it, which makes it impossible for the context to be completely determined.[123] Moreover, if intention depends on context, there is a force innate to the sign that enables it to break with its context. Derrida asserts that a context is limited because it cannot create itself *ex nihilo* and that it is finite.[124] Derrida thinks that speech act theory is an example of abstracting from the context in order to refine one's analysis.

Whether or not mantras are speech acts or meaningful is not a scholarly disagreement that is very significant to the world-renouncer, who is more concerned with its power to liberate a person from the cycle of birth and death. Śaṅkara makes this very clear when he comments on the following passage from the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (2.2.4): '*Om* is the bow; the soul is the arrow; and Brahman is called its target.' Based on this passage, Śaṅkara comments:

> Just as the bow is the cause of the arrow's hitting the target, so *Om* is the bow that brings about the soul's entry into the Immutable. For the soul when purified by the repetition of *Om*, gets fixed in Brahman with the help of *Om* without any hindrance, just as an arrow shot from a bow gets transfixed in the target. Therefore *Om* is a bow, being comparable to a bow.[125]

Abhinavagupta agrees with Śaṅkara that the mantra possesses the power to liberate someone. By serving as a device for concentration for Abhinavagupta, mantras have the ability to free the mind of distractions.[126] To recite a mantra in accord with the flow of one's breath is to fill it with the vibration (*spanda*) of consciousness that also makes consciousness itself vibrate.[127] The mantra is also a means by which a person is able to see the divinities within the body. Since all language is grounded in the supreme Pāravāc, the liberated renouncer encounters in every word nothing but the primordial word, being taken by his consciousness to the source of the mantra.[128] Transcending, finally, all language and duality, the renouncer enters eternal silence.[129]

From the perspective of Derrida, it is inconceivable that the mantra could have the ability to liberate anyone because it is more akin to a supplement of language, which intervenes itself in the place of something in order to replace it. Functioning like a supplement, the mantra is an adjunct to language that takes a subaltern moment, which is unable to give any relief. It is only possible for the supplement to respond to 'the nonlogical logic of a game.'[130] Rather than some metaphysical force, the mantra can be viewed as a supplement that lacks a source because a supplement is always a supplement of a supplement. This suggests that supplement, which lacks presence or absence, is devoid of an essence.[131] From Derrida's viewpoint, the mantra possesses the power to free one to radical temporality and finitude, a realm where transcendence of the world is impossible. By giving utterance to the mantra, the speaker engages in mis-speaking because language is a promise to mutually speak about the things themselves.[132] Unfortunately, this is a promise, which is excessive by nature due to its impossible opening to the future that can never be kept. Based upon his grasp of language, Derrida concludes necessarily that a mantra is meaningless and represents the death of language.

WRITING

The ancient and medieval Indian philosopher lived in an oral culture in which writing was not an esteemed activity. Ancient Indian scribes were recognized as representing the lower social

segment.[133] According to the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka* (5.5.3), the activity of writing is listed among polluting actions and things that prevent one from reciting the sacred Vedas. The Indian emphasis on the oral nature of communication and learning is con-nected with their stress on the significance of sound (śabda), which represented the dynamic and powerful nature of the word.[134] In fact, the written characters of the alphabet, which seem to offer a person visual access to language, were considered a denigration and defilement of the sacred sound. The emphasis on oral communication is also found in early Buddhist works. The phrase 'Thus have I heard' (*evam me sutam*) was a common introduction to many Pali texts and stressed the personal testimony of someone who heard an oral message. By means of hearing a message, the hearer was given an oppor-tunity to participate existentially in that which was heard.[135] Within the context of the early Buddhist community, there evolved schools of reciters (*bhāṇaakas*) that became custodians of the uttered word and also played roles in proselytizing and transmitting the Buddhist message. The practice of writing was not enhanced in Indian culture by the impermanent mate-rials used, a lack of adequate binding, problems associated with additions to texts by copyists, and negative cultural atti-tudes toward writing. Śaṅkara classifies writing, for instance, as an action, which by necessity means that its results are impermanent like the pro-ducts of all actions.[136] A much different attitude toward writing is expressed in the works of postmodern thinkers like Derrida and Blanchot.

According to the postmodern position of Maurice Blanchot, there is an absurd and violent aspect to writing. 'To want to write: what an absurdity. Writing is the decay of the will, just as it is the loss of power, and the fall of the regular fall of the beat, the disaster again.'[137] Writing is also a sacrificial activity that suggests violence because the writer is called to become the sacrificial victim of his self-initiated ritual. From the perspective of Blanchot, it is absurd to think that when we are writing we are actually producing a work, because writing is more closely related to absence rather than presence of the work.[138] By writing, the writer creates absence of the work be-cause writing is something that passes through the work in the sense that it completes itself and disappears even as it

produces itself in the book.[139] The philosophical position that Blanchot wants to maintain is that there is no present moment and thus the product of writing possesses no presence; it can only be absent.

Derrida shares many of Blanchot's opinions on the nature of writing. Derrida agrees that there is something violent about writing. Writing is a risky endeavour that is dangerous and causes anguish because writing does not know where it is going. It is best to think of writing as a *pharmakon*, a drug that is both a medicine and/or a poison with the ability to either give life or take it away. The risk of taking the pharmakon of writing also involves its tendency to leads us astray.[140] It is best to think of writing as an infertile process of disseminating, because it is a scattering of seeds that can never be recovered or inseminate anything.[141] Thus writing literally means nothing. To risk mean-ing nothing suggests entering into play, which implies entering into the play of différance, a technical term coined by Derrida that will be discussed in later chapters in greater depth. For the present, it can be understood as the finite movement that precedes and structures all opposition, which implies that it originates all differences.

By writing, for Blanchot, the writer surrenders himself/herself to the absence of time: 'The time of the absence of time is without a present, without a presence.'[142] In his/her surrender to the absence of time, the writer becomes fascinated with it, which suggests that one should not interpret time's absence as something negative. Buried within time's absence is affirma-tion: 'It is the time when nothing begins, when initiative is not possible, when, before the affirmation, there is already a return of the affirmation.'[143] Since within the time of time's absence nothing appears or is renewed, time's absence is not dialectical, nor is it related to cognition in any sense because it is always past, and one can only recognize it as such and never really know it. Blanchot refers to time's absence as the dead present, which is a continually arriving time in which death is present and which suggests the impossibility of making any presence real.[144] The dead present is a mere shadow or double of the present. From within the solitude of writing, the writer surren-ders himself/herself to the risk of time's absence.[145] Derrida argues along the same lines as Blanchot when the former refers

to writing as 'a living-dead, a reprieved corpse, a deferred life, a semblance of breath.'[146] Some Indian philosophers would agree with both postmodern thinkers that writing possesses a deathlike quality, although the Indian thinkers tend to emphasis the creative and dynamic quality of speech, unlike either postmodern thinker.

The dead time within the present, for Derrida, is marked by what he refers to as arche-writing, which is radically originary because nothing precedes it, founds it, or controls it. Derrida suggests that arche-writing goes beyond what Blanchot is referring to in his works because it is never an object or a form of presence. Arche-writing is the movement of différance, a play of traces. By means of its movement, arche-writing, a spatial and temporal pattern of différance which produces all things and is itself continually reproduced, isolates and effaces itself in the process of writing itself because in itself it does not exist. This type of writing precedes ordinary writing and is its precondition. Arche-writing is an inscription and makes an imprint that leaves a mark.[147]

Arguing along similar lines, Blanchot says that when the solitary writer writes in the dead present, he/she makes marks that leave traces. Blanchot distinguishes between a mark and a trace. The latter does not depend on the former:

> The traces do not refer to the moment of the mark, they are without origin, but not without end in the very permanence that seems to perpetuate them, traces which, even in becoming confused and replacing each other, are there forever, and forever cut off from that of which they would be the traces, having no other being than their plurality, as if there were not a trace, but traces, never the same and always repeated.[148]

Marks and traces share in common, however, absence from the present moment. If the activity of writing leaves traces that disappear in the space of writing, it represents an invisible type of destruction that should not upset anyone because it is unseen by anyone.

With his conception of the relationship between writing and speech, Derrida stands in opposition to the traditional opinion of Indian culture about their relationship, as well as the traditional western understanding. We have already seen that in

Indian culture speech is given pre-eminence over writing, which is more immediate and powerful. From Derrida's perspective, speech in India represents presence, whereas writing manifests a peculiar kind of secondary quality. Moreover, Indian thinkers are convinced that speech preceded writing, an inferior and polluting activity. By means of his deconstructive method, Derrida deconstructs the opposition between speech and writing, and asserts that writing is prior to speech and more central to language than speech itself. Derrida does not intend to claim that writing preceded speech in a linguistic evolutionary sense, but he is rather asking about what is involved in this question of priorities.[149] If we can imagine speech as something that falls from the body and offers itself to understanding, Derrida claims that speech immediately becomes stolen: 'Speech is stolen: since it is stolen from language it is, thus stolen from itself, that is, from the thief who has always already lost speech as property and initiative.'[150] In contrast, from the standpoint of the Indian thinkers, speech cannot be stolen, even in Derrida's paradoxical way, because it is a part of the person, but it can help one attain liberation in its mantra form.

Although Derrida stands in opposition to the general consensus in the Indian tradition about the relationship between speech and writing, he is in much closer agreement with the renouncers when he refers to the role of forgetfulness in writing. In fact, writing signifies forgetfulness by supplanting memory.[151] Many Indian renouncers would tend to agree with Derrida's assertion that 'Writing is that forgetting of the self, that exteriorization, the contrary of the interiorizing memory, of the *Erinnerung* that opens the history of the spirit.'[152] With the exception of the Nikāya Buddhists, Indian philosophers would not trace the forgetting of the self, however, to writing, but would rather find a link to ignorance. The Indian thinkers would also tend to agree with Derrida, with only a minor qualification, that writing is an activity that possesses no negative or positive value. The Nikāya Buddhists, Śaṅkara, and Rāmānuja would all agree with Derrida that writing possesses no essence of its own. And they would also agree with Derrida that writing plays in an unreal semblance. According to Derrida, writing can represent anything because it stands for nothing in particular, a position that gets a sympathetic hearing among the Indian philosophers.

There is also common ground between the Indian thinkers and Derrida on the significance of the relation between truth and writing. The Indian philosophers tend to agree with Derrida when he writes, 'In so doing, writing estranges itself immensely from the truth of the thing itself, from the truth of speech, from the truth that is open to speech.'[153]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter, we have noticed that Derrida shares more in common with respect to his grasp of language with the Nikāya Buddhists than with the Hindu thinkers. Derrida and the Buddhists agree that language is impermanent and temporal in nature and possesses no lasting structure, although Derrida locates the lack of structure within language itself—its supplementary nature—and not simply due to causation. Both parties also agree that language is intrinsically limited, and it cannot embody or express absolute truth.

Derrida also shares some opinions about language with Śaṅkara regarding the non-eternal nature of letters, the lack of complete meaning in the world, and the importance of context, even though Derrida thinks that context can never be completely determined. Their differences are, however, even more significant. Derrida does not think that language or its meaning is grounded in some metaphysical entity; rather it is impermanent—it disseminates, and supplements. We have also noticed that these thinkers differ about the denotative power of words, the nature of metaphor, and the potential of a mantra, which tends to prevent and subvert according to Derrida's theory of language, whereas the mantra allows one to focus on the eternal self from Śaṅkara's perspective.

Derrida's differences with Rāmānuja and Abhinavagupta are numerous. Derrida thinks that denoting makes something other in contrast to Rāmānuja, and they differ over whether a thing can be called an object because Rāmānuja misses the erasuring nature of naming and the otherness of a thing from Derrida's position, whereas Derrida does not recognize the important role of trust in generating knowledge and offers only radical skepticism from Rāmānuja's standpoint. From Derrida's perspective, the theory of language espoused by Abhinavagupta is an excellent example of logocentrism, a grounding of language in a transcendent absolute, and a failure to recognize that meaning cannot be discovered because it is a function of play. These philosophers also disagree about the role of the intentionality of the speaker and Abhinavagupta's connection of intentionality with meaning.

The preceding discussion suggests four tendencies embodied in the theories of language among some Indian philosophers. There is a tendency among some Indian philosophers to conceptualize the nature of language as grounded in something permanent, whereas Derrida rejects any metaphysical foundation for language, and emphasizes its impermanence within the flux of time, which is not unlike some schools of Indian philosophy. Although it may not convey new knowledge, another tendency among Indian philosophers is to view language as a repository of ancient knowledge that might have been obscured by ignorance. A third tendency is that the normative form of language is oral rather than written. Finally, some Indian philosophers are very suspicious of language.

Moreover, we have noted the importance of speech in the Indian tradition and its negative attitude toward writing. However, the Hindu thinkers discussed in this chapter did write books, which often took the form of commentaries on authoritative thinkers, and the Nikāya Buddhists preserved the teachings of the Buddha in what may have appeared to them to be an apparently more lasting textual form, even though it was periodically necessary to rewrite these works due to the impermanence of the material used for the written works. From Derrida's perspective, this historical evolution of the spoken word toward the written word, although a strong oral tradition never really died in India and continues to play an important cultural function into the present time, marks the end of the book, contrary to common opinion, and the beginning of writing. In his prophetic role, Derrida announces the death of the book, which really represents the death of speech.[154] By questioning the authority of the book by means of a death announcement, Derrida's purpose is to challenge the priority of speech over writing.

The Indian thinkers, much like traditional westerners, seem to suggest that a book should posses a unifying principle that

consists in its reference to one or more sources of privileged authority. Thus the notion of a book conveys a sense of totality of the signifier. For Derrida, unless a totality that is constituted by the signified pre-exists it, this idea of a totality of the signifier cannot be a whole.[155] From another perspective, due to their emphasis on the experiential nature of verifying the contents of a book's message, the Indian thinkers agree with Derrida when he states that a book possesses no intrinsic value. Because of his conviction that a book lacks an inherent value, Derrida composes works that are not a book in the ordinary sense. The best example of this is his non-book entitled *Glas* with its double columns of text representing his reading of Hegel and Genet. These figures encounter each other in a play of limitless supplementarity, which necessarily suggests that neither figure gains a privileged status over the other as a source of truth. Neither figure gets in the final word, neither gains authority over the other, and neither wins in the dialogic exchange. This suggests that the Hegelian dialectic is dead.

There are important implications for the book because its intention and integrity are invisible, suggesting that a book always hides something. Edward W. Said interprets this critically as a gnostic doctrine of a text.[156] A book also reveals itself as incomplete for Derrida. In other words, a book possesses gaps, which suggest its open-ended nature. Consequently, it can never be finished. And if a book is forever incomplete, its meaning can never be fully revealed or become present. Within a smaller context, this chapter cannot be concluded from this type of viewpoint. It is only the compassion of the author or lack of a true composer that bring this discussion to a pause. However, we have made some marks and have left some traces for others to retrace.

With respect to the problem of rationality, Derrida's understanding of language goes a long way in undermining rationality because language, a form of play, possesses no lasting structure due to its supplementary nature, which implies that it adds to itself only to be replaced. Like rationality, language is limited, constantly changes, and disseminates. If a sign represents nothing to which it can point, the term 'rationality' possesses no intrinsic denotative power because there is nothing to which a sign can point. Moreover, a sign (e.g. rationality) is always

the supplement of the thing itself. Derrida's notion of deconstruction goes beyond the reasonable by its double-cross, a breaking through and a violation, which suggests the undermining of rationality.

ENDNOTES

1. Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr and Richard Rand (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), pp. 3a, 253a.
2. Derrida, *Cinders*, p. 39.
3. Ibid., p. 49.
4. Ibid., p. 49.
5. For more detailed discussions of Vāc see the following: W. Norman Brown, *Man in the Universe: Some Continuities in Indian Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970); W. Norman Brown, 'The Creative Role of the Goddess Vāc in the Rig Veda', in *Pratidānam: Indian and Indo-European Studies Presented to Franciscus Bernardus Jacobus Kuiper on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. J. C. Heesterman *et al.* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1968), pp. 393–7; Louis Renou, 'Les pouvoirs de la parole dans le Ṛgveda', *Etudes védiques et pāninéennes* (Paris: de Boccard, 1955), pp. 1–27.
6. Frits Staal, p. 508; Thomas B. Coburn, '"Scripture" in India: Towards a Typology of the Word in Hindu Life', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 52 (1984), p. 452.
7. Frits Staal, 'Oriental Ideas on the Origin of Language', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 99, No. 1 (1979), p. 9.
8. William A. Graham, 'Scripture as Spoken Word', in *Rethinking Scripture: Essays from a Comparative Perspective*, ed. Miriam Levering (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 137.
9. Harold Coward, *Sacred Word and Sacred Text: Scripture in World Religions* (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1988), p. 139.
10. *The Middle Length Sayings (Majjhima-Nikāya)*, Vol. 3, trans. I. B. Horner (London: Luzac and Company, Ltd., 1967–70), 3.234.
11. David J. Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy: Continuities and Discontinuities* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), p. 61.
12. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 216.
13. Ibid., pp. 216–17.
14. Ibid., p. 304.
15. George D. Bond, 'The Gradual Path as a Hermeneutical Approach to the *Dhamma*', in *Buddhist Hermeneutics*, ed. Donald S.

Lopez, Jr, Studies in East Asian Buddhism 6 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), p. 33.

16. Etienne Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien, des Origines a l' Ère Śaka*, Bibliotheque du Museen, Bd. 43 (Louvain: Université de Louvain Institut Orientaliste, 1967), p. 13.

17. *Middle Length Sayings*, 1.265.

18. *Dialogues of the Buddha (Digha Nikāya)*, Vols 3, trans. T. W. Rhys Davids and C. A. F. Rhys Davids (London: Lūzac and Company, Ltd., 1966–71), 2.100.

19. Ibid., 2.154.

20. George D. Bond., *The Word of the Buddha: The Tipitaka and its Interpretation in Theravada Buddhism* (Colombo: M. D. Gunasena & Co., Ltd., 1982), p. 30.

21. Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*, trans. Bhikkhu Ñyānamoli, 2nd Edition (Colombo: A. Semage, 1964); *Visuddhimagga of Bhuddhaghosacariya*, ed. Henry Clarke Warren, Harvard Oriental Series, Vol. 41 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 7.72.

22. *Middle Length Sayings*, 3.48–9.

23. Ibid., 3.73–4.

24. Jacques Derrida, *Signéponge/Signsponge*, trans. Richard Rand (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 56.

25. Ibid., p. 56.

26. Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, trans. Samuel Weber (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p. 20.

27. Harold Coward, *Derrida and Indian Philosophy* (Albany: Sate University of New York Press, 1990), p. 88. Coward views Derrida as a bridge between traditional Indian and modern Western philosophy, pp. 8–9. The discussion in this chapter will show that this position is difficult to maintain.

28. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 10. Richard Rorty thinks that there are two senses of deconstruction: the first sense breaks down the distinction between philosophy and literature and the second is a method of reading texts (p. 85). Rorty criticizes Derrida's method by stating that the only useful distinction between philosophy and literature that we need is that between the familiar and the unfamiliar (p. 87) in *Essays on Heidgger and Others: Philosophical Papers*, Vol. 2. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

29. Śaṅkara, *Eight Upaniṣads (Iśa, Kena, Kaṭha, and Taittiriya), Vol. I* and *(Aitareya, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍukya, Praśna), Vol. II with the Commentary of Śankaracārya*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965, 1966), *Taittiriya Upaniṣad*, 1.7.1. The support for Śaṅkara's assertion that the Upaniṣads are a valid means of knowing Brahman is found in the nature of ultimate reality itself because it is a source of knowledge in the form of words (śabda), according to Anantanand Rambachan, 'Where Words Can Set Free: The Liberating Potency of Vedic Words in the Hermeneutics of Śaṅkara', in *Texts in Context: Traditional Hermeneutics in South Asia*, ed. Jeffrey R. Timm (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 35.

30. Natalia Isayeva, *Shankara and Indian Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 211.

31. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 296.

32. Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, p. 18.

33. Śaṅkara, *The Vedānta Sūtras with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya*, trans. George Thibaut, *Sacred Books of the East*, Vols XXIV, XXXVIII (Delhi Motilal Banarsidass, 1968), 2.1.11, 1.1.3.

34. Ibid., 2.3.17.

35. Ibid., 2.3.22. From Derrida's perspective, there is a serious flaw with any commentary on a text, like Śaṅkara's on the *Vedānta Sūtras*, because when a commentary attempts to convey the truth of a previously existing text it is outwitted by a supplementary logic. According to Derrida, there is always something that escapes any reading of a text no matter how insightful, clever, or resourceful the reader.

36. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. 216–17.

37. Ibid., *Dissemination*, p. 268.

38. Derrida, *Given Time I: Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 80.

39. Coward, *Derrida and Indian Philosophy*, p. 91.

40. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 279.

41. Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, p. 7.

42. Śaṅkara, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 1.3.28.

43. Ibid., 1.3.30. See Bimal Krishna Matilal for a discussion of the *sphoṭa* theory in the Indian philosophy of language, in *Word and the World: India's Contribution ~~to the~~ Study of Language* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 77–105.

44. Ibid., 1.3.28.

45. Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, pp. 9–10.

46. Ganeśwar Miśra, *Language, Reality, and Analysis: Essays on Indian Philosophy*, ed. J. N. Mohanty (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), p. 21. Arvind Sharma discusses four kinds of *lakṣaṇā* in *A Hindu Perspective on the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), p. 81.

47. Śaṅkara, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 1.1.4.

48. Śaṅkara, *Taittiriya Upaniṣad*, 2.7.1.

49. Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, p. 3.

50. Ibid., p. 209.

51. Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 268.
52. Ibid., p. 219.
53. Śaṅkara, *A Thousand Teachings: The Upadeśasāhasri of Śaṅkara*, trans. and ed. Sengaku Mayeda (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 1.18.188.
54. Rambachan. p. 39.
55. Śaṅkara, *Upadeśasāhasri*, 1.8.175. Debabrata Sinha states that words (śabda) have an autonomous function in Vedānta philosophy and are not limited to the function of serving as a means of expression for concepts that are communicated in complete and precise terms in 'Reflections on Some Key Terms in Advaita Vedānta', *Language in Indian Philosophy and Religion*, ed. Harold G. Coward, Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses Supplements 5 (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1978), p. 35.
56. Ibid., 1.8.96; 1.18.176; 1.18.180; 1.18.96. See also Paul Hacker, *Vivarta: Studien zur Geschichte der illusionistischen Kosmologie und Erkenntnistheorie der Inder*, Abhandlungen Geistes und Sozialwissenschaftliche Klasse, 1953, NR, 5 (Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, 1953), pp. 220–5, 234–6.
57. Śaṅkara, *Upadeśasāhasri*, 1.18.199.
58. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 11.
59. Miśra. p. 26.
60. Śaṅkara, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 1.1.1, 3.3.9.
61. Wilhelm Halbfass, *Studies in Kumārila and Śaṅkara*, Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik Monographie 9 (Reinbek: Verlag für Orientalistische Fachpublikationen, 1983), p. 40.
62. Derrida, *Psyché*, pp. 388–90.
63. Coward, *Derrida and Indian Philosophy*. p. 92.
64. Ibid., p. 92.
65. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 117.
66. Derrida *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 49.
67. Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 121.
68. Julius J. Lipner, *The Face of Truth: A Study of Meaning and Metaphysics in the Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), p. 9.
69. Rāmānuja, *Vedārthasaṃgraha of Rāmānuja*, trans. J. A. B. van Buitenen (Poona: Deccan College, 1956), p. 138.
70. Ibid., 120.
71. Ibid., 116.
72. Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*. p. 96.
73. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 109.

74. Matilal, p. 62.
75. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 108.
76. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 50.
77. Derrida, *Signéponge*, pp. 14, 16.
78. Ibid., p. 14.
79. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 245.
80. Rāmānuja, 116.
81. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 68.
82. Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 212, 214.
83. Ibid., p. 229.
84. Rāmānuja, *The Vedānta Sūtras with the Commentary of Rāmānuja*, trans. George Thibaut, *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XLVII (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971), 1.1.1.
85. Rāmānuja, *Vedārthasaṃgraha*, p. 27.
86. Rāmānuja, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 1.1.13.
87. Rāmānuja, *Vedārthasaṃgraha*, p. 28.
88. Gerald James Larson, 'The Aesthetic (*rasāsvadā*) and the Religious (*brahmāsvāda*) in Abhinavagupta's "Kashmir Śaivism",' *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. XXVI, No. 4 (October 1976), p. 374.
89. Abhinavagupta, *A Trident of Wisdom: Translation of Parātrisikā-Vivaraṇa*, trans. Jaideva Singh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 8.
90. Abhinavagupta, *Iśvara-Pratyabhijñā-Vimarśini*, 3 Vols, ed. and trans. K. C. Pandey (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), 2.3.1–2; *Trident of Wisdom*, p. 176.
91. André Padoux discusses the phonematic emanation of Paravāc in *Vāc: The Concept of the World in Selected Hindu Tantras*, trans. Jacques Gontier (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), pp. 223–329.
92. My translation, Derrida, *Psyché*, p. 561.
93. John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).
94. Abhinavagupta, *The Tantrāloka of Abhinava Gupta with Jayaratha's Commentary*, 12 vols, ed. Mukunda Rama Sastri and M. S. Kaul, Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies (Allahabad: Indian Press, 1918–38), 3.236.
95. Abhinavagupta, *The Dhvanyāloka of Ānandavardhana with the Locana of Abhinavagupta*, trans. Daniel H. H. Ingalls, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, M. V. Patwardhan, Harvard Oriental Series, Vol. 49 (London, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 1.4.
96. Ibid., 3.33.

97. Ibid., 2.1.
98. Ibid., 1.1.
99. Ibid., 1.4.
100. Ibid., 2.4.
101. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 260.
102. Abhinavagupta, *Locana*, 3.33.
103. Rodolphe Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 281.
104. Christopher Norris, *Derrida* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 113.
105. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Robinson and John Macquarrie (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), pp. 385–8.
106. Referring to Bhartṛhari's theory of language, Matilal thinks that he was not guilty of logocentrism in Derrida's sense of the term: 'For logocentrism, as I see it, flourishes and derives nourishment from the explicit condemnation...of writing, otherwise 'speech' cannot be promoted to the prime place' (p. 132). By his remarks, it is obvious that Matilal does not see the ontological implications of logocentrism and Derrida's criticism of this tradition.
107. Jitendra Nath Mohanty, *Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought: An Essay on the Nature of Indian Philosophical Thinking* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 82–3.
108. Ibid., p. 88.
109. Ibid., p. 91.
110. Daya Krishna, *The Nature of Philosophy* (Calcutta; Prachi Prakashan, 1955), p. 39.
111. Ibid., p. 52.
112. Ellison Banks Findly, '*Mantra kaviśasta*: Speech as Performative in the Ṛgveda', *Mantra*, ed. Harvey P. Alper (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 24, 29.
113. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 178.
114. J. Gonda, *Selected Studies: Vol. IV, History of Ancient Indian Religion* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), p. 248.
115. See Findly, p. 29; Harvey P. Alper, 'The Cosmos as Śiva's Language-Game: "Mantra" According to Kṣemarāja's *Śivasūtravimarśini*', in *Mantra*, ed. Harvey P. Alper (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 249–94; Wade T. Wheelock, 'The Mantra in Vedic and Tantric Ritual', in *Mantra*, ed. Harvey P. Alper, pp. 96–122.
116. Frits Staal, 'Vedic Mantras', in *Mantra*, ed. Harvey P. Alper, p. 66.
117. Ibid., p. 65.
118. Ibid., pp. 59–61.

119. Ibid., p. 67. Staal interprets mantras as meaningless because they began as sentences attached to ritual actions, in 'Oriental Ideas on the Origin of Language', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, No. 99 (1979), pp. 9–10. Thomas B. Coburn disagrees with Staal, and argues that mantras are intrinsically powerful and do not have conventional meaning, but yet they mean everything in '"Scripture" in India: Towards a Typology of the Word in Hindu Life', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, No. 52 (1984), p. 452. Coward also disagrees with Staal: 'The meaningfulness of *mantras* is not of the merely intellectual kind, it is meaning which has power (*śakti*). *Mantras* have the power to remove ignorance (*avidyā*), reveal truth (*dharma*), and realize release (*mokṣa*)' in *Sacred Word*, p. 115. A different perspective is offered by Mircea Eliade: 'A *mantra* is a "symbol" in the archaic sense of the term—it is simultaneously the symbolized "reality" and the symbolizing "sign"' in *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 215.
120. Findly, p. 27.
121. Harold Coward, 'The Meaning and Power of Mantras in Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadiya*' in *Mantra*, ed. Harvey P. Alper, p. 172.
122. Padoux, p. 378. John Hick argues that meaning is both a relational and a practical concept: 'Meaning is always for, or in relation to, a consciousness or a community of consciousness; and the meaning of which a consciousness is aware is the character of its environment perceived as rendering appropriate one rather than another type of behaviour or (more generally) of behavioral disposition' in *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 131.
123. Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, p. 18.
124. Ibid., p. 9.
125. Śaṅkara, *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 2.2.4.
126. Abhinavagupta, *Tantrāloka*, 5.140–1.
127. Mark S. G. Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration: An Analysis of the Doctrines and Practices of Kashmir Shaivism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 200.
128. Abhinavagupta, *Tantrāloka*, 32.21.
129. Ibid., 4.194.
130. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. 144–5.
131. Ibid., p. 259.
132. Ibid., p. 314.
133. Coburn, 'Scripture in India', p. 104.
134. Coward, *Sacred Word*, p. 121.
135. Bimala Churn Law, *A History of Pali Literature*, Vol. I (Varanasi: Bhartiya, 1933), p. 28; Lamotte, p. 150. Donald S. Lopez, Jr thinks that the written word for Nikāya Buddhism becomes a dead letter that is

removed from the self-presence of enlightenment (p. 40) in 'Authority and Orality in the Mahāyāna', *Numen*, Vol. XLII, No. 1 (January 1995), pp. 21–47.

136. Śaṅkara, *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 1.11.4.

137. Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), p. 11.

138. Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus and Other Literary Essays*, trans. Lydia Davis (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 1981), p. 7.

139. Ibid., p. 147.

140. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 135.

141. Derrida, *Dissemination*, pp. 99, 125.

142. Blanchot, *Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 73.

143. Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 30.

144. Ibid., p. 31.

145. Blanchot, *Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 74; *Space*, p. 31.

146. Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 143.

147. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 57. Richard Rorty makes an interesting observation about Derrida's style: 'Derrida learned from Heidegger's example that the problem is not "to touch upon the nature of language without doing it injury" but rather to create a style so different as to make one's books incommensurable with those of one's precursors.' (p. 126) in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

148. Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, trans. Lycette Nelson (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 54.

149. Norris, p. 83.

150. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 178.

151. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 24.

152. Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 137.

153. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 8.

154. Ibid., p. 185.

155. Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 185.

156. Said, *The World*, p. 184.



Desire

According to a late Vedic creation myth (RV 10.129.1–4), there was neither being nor non-being, neither death nor immortality, and neither night nor day at the beginning of the cosmos. An all-pervasive darkness enveloped water and that one (*tad ekam*), a single neuter principle without an other. By means of the power of heat, the single one was born within the primordial darkness and watery expanse. Once the single one was animated, it experienced desire (*kāma*) which became the initial seed of the mind. There are a number of important elements that are embodied in this myth. There is an explicit monistic idea that appears in his hymn, the single principle is self-existent, no explicit notion of a self (Ātman) is mentioned, desire forms the link between being and non-being, and a close connection exists between heat (*tapas*) and desire, a driving force of the procreative process.[1] Due to the self-fertilization ability of the single principle, sexual congress was not necessary for life because heat gave rise to desire, but this is not necessarily the case in other Vedic hymns.

From within a context of his notion of différance, Jacques Derrida finds this type of creation myth very interesting because there cannot be a first moment if there is no différance from the moment of the origin. Although we will devote more time to the importance of it in a later chapter, Derrida's notion of différance

is derived from the verb 'to differ', signifying either non-identity or the order of the same depending on the context: 'On the one hand, it indicates difference as distinction, inequality, or discernibility; on the other, it express the interposition of delay, the interval of a *spacing* and *temporalizing* that puts off until "later" what is presently denied, the possible that is presently impossible'.[2] What is especially significant about this term for the Vedic myth of the origin of desire is that embodied within its root meaning différance means to delay, to defer. For Derrida, this suggests that the moment of origin cannot be the first time because it needs the second moment to follow it and make it the first moment. Thus the second or moment of original delay is necessary to allow the first instant to be the first, which suggests that the second moment possesses priority over the first and indicates the irreducibility of temporalizing. Derrida asserts that the time of origin is merely a repetition of the initial moment of origin, giving non-origin priority over the original time.[3] With relation to the Vedic myth on the origin, this position implies that there is no discernible identity to desire as a monistic principle.

In other Vedic texts, a husband and wife find themselves in a difficult situation because Lopamudrā, the wife, wants to have a child, but her husband has taken a vow of chastity. Being overcome by the power of desire, she sexually overpowers her husband who regrets the result and attempts to atone for his lapse by drinking soma, the sacred drink of immortality, asking for forgiveness, and acknowledging the pervasiveness of desire among human beings. This episode indicates a close connection between desire and sexual drive (RV 1.179.1–6). It is the male who is sexually driven in the story of Purāravas, a mortal man, and his beloved Urvaśi, a water-nymph, who succeeds in fulfilling her lover's desire by having sexual intercourse with him three times a day, even though she was devoid of desire and merely submitted to his sexual demands (RV 10.95.1–4). Another hymn relates the close connection between desire and sexual activity by telling a story about the marriage of Sūryā, daughter of the sun god, and Soma, as the moon (RV 10.85.1–41). In these stories kāma (desire, love, lust)[4] is a kind of heat (tapas).[5]

We find similar kinds of significance attached to desire in the *Atharva Veda*. Besides a creation myth (AV 19.52.1–5)

similar to the hymn in the *Rig Veda* (19.129), another hymn explicitly affirms that kāma was the first born in the cosmos (AV 9.2.1–25). These hymns suggest that it is possible to achieve anything in the cosmos with kāma, a universal gift given to the entire creation. In other hymns desire gives to desire, which makes kāma the giver and recipient (AV 3.29.7), gods are asked to fulfil human desires (AV 3.10.13), the fire sacrifice is stated to fulfil desires (AV 11.7.8), beings are driven by desire (AV 18.1.12), and desire is only satisfied by desire (AV 11.7.13). These kinds of citations from early Indian texts about the significance of desire would certainly catch the interest of many postmodern thinkers because of its centrality to their thinking.

It is often implied in the philosophical positions of our postmodern thinkers that they share a conviction for the necessity of excessiveness, to push everything beyond their social limits. An influential figure in this regard is George Bataille and his concept of eroticism, an intentional transgression of social norms and taboos. The locus of eroticism, an excessive emotion that responds to one's desire to merge with the universe, is the desired object which often assumes the form of a prostitute: 'The object of sensual desire is by nature another desire. The desire of the senses is the desire, if not to destroy oneself, at least to be consumed and to lose oneself without reservation.'[6] Along with the violence of transgression, desire contributes to the insanity of the erotic world, a realm of chaos. In contrast to such postmodern thinkers like Deleuze and Guattari, who think that desire is liberating, as we will discover in this chapter, Bataille thinks that eroticism liberates the individual. With its foundation in the human sexual act itself, eroticism possesses a violent and dreamlike quality.[7] It is possible to become lost in eroticism, an activity that dissolves separate beings and manifests their basic continuity.[8] In the remainder of this chapter we want to explore a dialogue between selected postmodern philosophers with Upaniṣadic philosophers, Nikāya Buddhists, Śaṅkara, Abhinavagupta, Aurobindo, and Radhakrishnan. We will compare more precisely the positions on desire between selected thinkers of the *Upaniṣads* and Nikāya Buddhism with Deleuze and Guattari, we will have Śaṅkara and Abhinavagupta encounter the psychological approach of Jacques Lacan, and we

will compare Levinas with both Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan. Finally, we will briefly compare Deleuze and Guattari with Lacan in order to comprehend their shared notions and differences.

DESIRE, THE *UPANIṢADS*, AND ANTI-OEDIPUS

The Upaniṣadic texts advance the discussion about the nature of desire, although some similarities with the *Rig Veda* and *Atharva Veda* are evident in the *Upaniṣads*. In two of the earliest *Upaniṣads* we find creation stories with desire playing a central role in each narrative. According to an early text, there was only the self (Ātman) at the beginning of the cosmos that wished for a wife in order to procreate (BĀU 1.4.17). The author of the text draws a parallel between this original situation and the present moment of humans who desire when they are lonely or want wealth, and assume that they are incomplete if they are unable to obtain their desires. If our desires are unsatisfied according to the author, this results in feelings of frustration and incompleteness. In another creation myth (ChU 3.19.1–3), the cosmos developed from non-being into an existent that became an egg, and it split apart after a year into silver and gold parts, which symbolized, respectively, the earth and the sky surrounded by an outer membrane of mountains and an inner membrane of cloud and mist. The veins and fluid of this cosmic egg were, respectively, the rivers and ocean. The birth of the sun was celebrated joyfully and all desires rose upwards toward the source of light. This myth suggests that desire was latent within the cosmos and became a part of the process of creation.

In contrast to this initial mythical approach of some early Upaniṣadic texts to the origin of desire, Deleuze and Guattari create something more akin to a postmodern, mechanistic nightmare. With a predominant use of mechanistic and economic language, they acknowledge at the beginning of their work the nature of their basic presupposition: 'Everything is a machine'.[9] The self and nature are superseded by a mechanical process that transforms everything into a machine and brings these machines together into relationship with each other, leaving the self and non-self without any meaning. Within the locus of human ontology, desire plays a privileged role along with the social.[10] It is desire, a life-affirming force that stands

in sharp opposition to Hegelian negativity that creates desiring-machines, which make humans an organism. The process of the continual production of desire and desiring-machines is called schizophrenia.[11] The desiring-machines that are produced are also referred to as binary machines that adhere to their own set of laws governing their associations, forming a view of desire that is foreign to the spirit of the *Upaniṣads*.[12]

Along with imagination, shame, fear, and meditation, desire is equated with the mind in the *Upaniṣads* (BĀU 1.5.3). But in the same text (BĀU 3.2.7), the mind is seized by desire, and it is the mind that desires desires (*kāmān kāmayate*). In the historically later *Maitri Upaniṣad* (6.34), a distinction is made between the pure and impure mind, depending on whether or not the mind is connected to desire (*kāmasamparkāt*) or freed from it (*kāma-vivarjitam*). Those individuals with a mind subjected to desire are in a state of bondage (6.30) because desires are continually arising as old desires are fulfilled in a constant cycle that feeds *kārma*, leading to rebirth.

The close connection between the mind and desire is extended to the Ātman (universal self) but in a more positive sense of *satya-kāma* (real desire). Within the body is a small abode equated with a little lotus flower, this contains all beings and desires and is free from the cycle of time and death. This is the Ātman (soul, self) that is free from evil, time, death, sorrow, and pain, whose desire is the real (ChU 8.1.1–6; 8.7.1). This text is very instructive because the desires associated with the Ātman are contained and controlled, the only positive and real desire is the desire for the Ātman, and other desires are unreal because they are subject to eventual destruction. The person whose desire is the Ātman becomes immortal, is freed from earthly desires, and is desireless because all his desires are satisfied. Once one knows the Ātman and becomes the universal principle, there is nothing more to desire because there is nothing else worth desiring due to the permanent nature of the self in comparison to the desires connected to the body (BĀU 4.44.6–12). Thus, by knowing the universal principle, one gains all of one's desires and becomes immortal (TU 2.1.1; 2.5.1; 3.10.5; AiU 4.6). According to the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (3.21–2), by knowing Brahman and possessing no desires, one moves beyond the cycle of rebirth (*saṃsāra*), and such a person

is called a perfected self (*kṛtātman*) because his desire is satisfied and all his worldly desires have vanished, whereas those without this knowledge and possessing desires are reborn again in the world. The person who gains such knowledge severs the link between ignorance (avidyā), a false perception of reality, and desire, which is rooted in ignorance. Due to ignorance, one perceives plurality where there is none, one sees distinctions that do not in fact exist, one views oneself as separate when in reality one is part of a single reality, and one sees differences where there are none. As long as ignorance persists, desire also endures until an intuitive realization makes desire meaningless.

Deleuze and Guattari suggest that the only meaningful phenomenon is desire: 'Everything revolves around desiring-machines and the production of desire'.[13] From the viewpoint of the Upaniṣadic philosophers, this is a one-dimensional analysis of human life and society. In contrast to the Upaniṣadic conception of the Ātman that forms the centre and meaning of human existence, Deleuze and Guattari conceive of the self as located on the periphery of life: 'This subject itself is not at the centre, which is occupied by the machine, but on the periphery, with no fixed identity, forever decentred *defined* by the states through which it passes.'[14] Instead of the permanent, eternal, centred self of the *Upaniṣads*, Deleuze and Guattari offer those in the postmodern netherland a displaced, decentred, impermanent, and peripheral self that is superseded by a machine.

If the only real desire worth possessing is connected to knowing the self or universal principle in some of the *Upaniṣad* texts, ordinary desires are inferior in comparison, a nonsensical position from the perspective of Deleuze and Guattari. For these postmodern thinkers, desire produces reality: 'If desire is productive, it can be productive only in the real world and can produce only reality.'[15] But the position of many of the *Upaniṣad* texts does not suggest that desires are not important. Desire is, for instance, classified as a mark of intelligence along with consciousness, perception, discrimination, wisdom, insight, purpose, memory, conception, will, and life (AiU 5.2). The role of desire in sexual pleasure and the possibility that it can become inflamed by thoughts of women are acknowledged by the texts (BĀU 3.9.11). Desire is thus a force that drives human

beings and functions to entice them, a stance not unlike that of Deleuze and Guattari. Yama, lord of death, tries to entice the youthful, knowledge seeking Naciketas by offering him whatever the young man desires in order to dissuade him from learning the secrets about death (KaṭhU 1.24–5). In a similar vein, King Brihadratha renounced the world, turned over his kingdom to his son, and went off to the forest to practise extreme forms of austerities (tapas) by continually gazing at the sun while holding his arms erect. The ascetic king encountered Śākāyanya, an enlightened being, who granted the king a boon. When the king expressed the desire to learn about the nature of the Ātman, the enlightened being asked him to choose other desires because it was a difficult question to answer (MaitU1.2–3). The ascetic king must have had a notion that by understanding the nature of the Ātman he could obtain all desires and all worlds (ChU 8.12.6; MuU 3.1.10). Moreover, desire is the very foundation of the world (KaṭhU 4.2). And yet it is foolish and childish to pursue desires because they lead to death and rebirth.

Since the Upaniṣadic philosophers assert that desire ultimately leads to suffering and unattractive goals, they suggest that there is something lacking in desire. Deleuze and Guattari respond:

> Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is, rather, the *subject* that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject; there is no fixed subject unless there is repression. Desire and its object are one and the same thing: the machine, as a machine of a machine. Desire is a machine, and the object of desire is another machine connected to it.[16]

This response clearly shows that Deleuze and Guattari reject the Lacanian definition of desire as a lack and the Upaniṣadic suggestion that desire embodies a lack for two fundamental reasons: a failure to account for the genealogy of the lack and treating the negativity of desire as an ontological fact. Deleuze and Guattari want to stress the affirmative, productive, and generative nature of desire and reject any negative connotations. If desire lacks a real object for the sake of argument, it would produce a fantasized object, which would function as a kind of double reality. In other words, it would be as though an imaginary object existed behind every real object.[17] Rather than

viewing desire leading to an negative end like many Upaniṣadic philosophers, Deleuze and Guattari understand it as a life-affirming force and not some rationale for an destitute social condition, or a means to legitimate a social hierarchy established to dominate a weaker and more servile group, or a form of spiritual bondage. From the perspective of Deleuze and Guattari, a negative grasp of desire is symptomatic of repressing an original positive and bounteous desire, an originally unrepressed libidinal diversity, and indicates the necessity for a liberation of desire from the prohibitive and repressive restrictions of culture, whereas a number of Upaniṣadic thinkers argue for the tendency of desire to enslave the benighted individual to the cycle of time.

The later Upaniṣadic texts are even more emphatic about the necessity of getting rid of desires. Depending on the particular text that one consults, the renouncer (*saṃnyāsin*) must burn them up, forsake them, turn away from them, snap the cord of desire's web, look at desires as vomit, and give up desires.[18] There are dire consequences for the renouncer who does not control his desires. Because the Paramahaṁsa ascetic is allowed to possess only a pair of loin cloths, a patched garment and a single staff, he would descend to the Raurava hell and thereafter be reborn in animal wombs, if he were to desire and take anything more (NpU 3). Due to the insatiable nature of desire, the renouncer cannot quench his thirst for desires by enjoying whatever thing he craves because desires only grow strong like a fire that is fed with a flammable fluid. According to the *Nāradaparivrājaka Upaniṣad* (5), the renouncer should not desire life or death. By freeing himself from desires, the *Kṣurikā Upaniṣad* (25) asserts, one remains free and gains immortality, a position not unlike that of the earlier Upaniṣadic texts.

Rather than repressing, controlling, or getting rid of desire like the Upaniṣadic sages, Deleuze and Guattari want to liberate it from prohibitive regulations, which is elucidated by the process of oedipalization. This process is twofold: a repressive society and a repressive family with the latter offering a displaced image of desiring reproduction, representing repressive incestuous familial drives.[19] Thus when desire is socially repressed it actualizes Oedipus, which prohibits desire from satisfying itself: 'It forces desire to take as its object the differentiated parental persons, and, brandishing the threats of the undifferentiated, prohibits the correlative ego from satisfying its desires with these persons, in the name of the same requirements of differentiations.'[20] The factitious Oedipus that shapes our unconscious creates structuring differentiations and threatens us with the undifferentiated. It is thus necessary to emancipate desire from the influence of the Oedipus complex by means of schizoanalysis, a topic that we will discuss more fully later.

NIKĀYA BUDDHISM AND SCHIZOANALYSIS

The notion of desire plays such an important role in early Buddhist thinking that it is explicitly constructed into the threefold worldview expressed in the *Majjhima Nikāya*.[21] Beginning with the highest or most refined part of this worldview, there is the *ānūpyadhātu* (world of the formless), a mentalistic kind of existence, the *rūpadhātu*, a realm of subtle matter, and *kāmadhātu*, the world of desire and material existence. This last realm is the sphere of the five senses and the abode of human beings, animals, ghosts, hells, and lower deities. Although the Buddhists adopted this worldview from Brahmanical religion in which there was the three-tiered celestial, atmospheric and terrestrial realms, the early Buddhists reformulated this appropriated worldview to fit their own needs, which is dependent upon their stress on the deficiencies of the world of desire that forms an obstacle to perfection. When desire becomes excessive and uncontrollable it distorts one's powers of perception and creates unwholesome states of mind that obstruct mental concentration connected to the practice of meditation, the path of perfection.

For the Buddhists, desire is directly connected to the root problem of existence which is *taṇhā* (craving), a rationale for the prevalence of suffering (*dukkha*) in life. There are three basic types of craving: for being (*bhava-taṇhā*); for non-being (*vibhava-taṇhā*); and for sensual desires (*kāma-taṇhā*).[22] By means of Freud's influence and his understanding of the death instinct, Deleuze and Guattari also recognize that desire wants death, functioning as its motor, just as it also seeks life.[23] But a synonym for craving and access to suffering for the Buddhists

is craving for sensual desires in a very wide sense that includes desire for sense pleasure, material well-being, power, opinions, and beliefs.[24] If craving is the root of suffering, the *Anguttara-Nikāya* clearly says that present, past, and future suffering is grounded in desire (*chanda*), an observation that demonstrates the interconnection between craving and desire.[25] Craving is also closely associated with ignorance, another force that drives craving much like desire does, and the false idea of a permanent self. From the postmodern perspective of Deleuze and Guattari, the root problem of life is not craving for sensual desires and subsequent suffering, but is rather the repression of desire.

Besides its intricate connection to craving for the Buddhists, desire is directly associated with causation and pain. The Buddhist doctrine of causation (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) or dependent arising does not demonstrate that the appearance and disappearance of phenomena that are so essential to the arising of sensual desire are not governed by a strict determinism.[26] The doctrine of causation does rather illustrate the circular, interrelated, dependent, and self-perpetuating nature of desire. According to the *Digha-Nikāya*, there are three instances in which desire is connected to the senses: sense desires are bound up with the objects and are in subjection to such desire; desires for things that one has created; beings who have desires for creations of others.[27] Since desire is stimulated by sense pleasure, gives rise to action (*kamma*), and gives rise to further existence within the cycle of causation, it is sufficient to eliminate desire in order to neutralize action, overcome attachment to sense pleasures, and future pain. Because sense pleasures render little satisfaction to the individual due to their impermanent nature, they are equated with suffering (dukkha) and painful metaphors like a skeleton, slaughterhouse, impaling stake and snake's head.[28] Similar to the Buddhist position, Deleuze and Guattari agree that desire is interrelated and self-perpetuating when they refer to its flowing: 'Desire constantly couples continuous flows and partial objects that are by nature fragmentary and fragmented. Desire causes the current to flow, itself flows in turn, and breaks the flows.'[29] For these postmodern thinkers, desire forms part of an infrastructure that embodies a reconciliation between the political economy of Marx and the

libidinal economy of Freud. This is evident especially when they discuss the flow of desire as the 'free energy (libido) of the desiring machines.'[30]

In order to alleviate pain associated with one's desires for the Nikāya Buddhists, one must practise self-control by renouncing the world, practising rigorous meditation, and gaining knowledge of the true nature of existence. Kalupahana views the effort to control and suppress the feelings—and senses that feed desire—as a deconstructive method: 'Once the deconstruction process was taken, feelings and perceptions can serve their proper functions without running the risk of reifying either their cognitive content or their emotive component.'[31] To refer to the Buddhist method as deconstructive is misleading and erroneous because it is a non-method for Derrida in the sense that it is not a singular event, not an act, not an operation, and not everything, but it is nothing.[32] Whatever value deconstruction possesses is derived 'from its inscription in a chain of possible substitutions, in what is too blithely called a "context".'[33] Deconstruction tends to be parasitic in the sense that it preys on other interpretations in a never-ending process. Another scholar finds the concept of desire paradoxical in Nikāya Buddhism:

> Briefly stated, the Buddhist paradox of desire is that desirelessness is ideal, yet one must cultivate one's desire to attain the ideal in order to be motivated to continue to strive for that goal. Every action one performs on the path to the goal is a manifestation of desire. If one is ever to attain desirelessness, it will be by means of desire-driven actions. Although ultimately one strives to be free of all desires, the only way to accomplish this is by means of desire.[34]

The Buddhist paradox that is discovered by Burford is more akin to a misinterpretation of the role of desire in Buddhism and a failure to see distinctions made by the Nikāya Buddhists between unwholesome (*akusala*) and wholesome (*kusala*) desire and intention.[35] The term chanda (intention, desire) can be used as a synonym for unwholesome craving and also used to indicate the path leading to *nibbāna* (final liberation).[36] Since desire or intention is not an end in itself with respect to the realization of nibbāna, the desire for liberation is a beneficial desire. Based on the above quotation, what Burford fails to see

is the function of intentionality that forms the foundation of the path to liberation.

In contrast to the Buddhist method for gaining liberation, a totally different approach is advocated by Deleuze and Guattari that they call schizoanalysis, a method whose purpose is not to resolve Oedipus. The purpose of this method is rather the following: 'Its aim is to de-oedipalize the unconscious in order to reach the real problems. Schizoanalysis proposes to reach those regions of the orphan unconscious indeed "beyond all law"—where the problem of Oedipus can no longer even be raised.'[37] According to Deleuze and Guattari, psychoanalysts have created an abstract figure with Oedipus that obscures our grasp of desire because we cannot see the productive nature of desire.[38] The overall thrust of this approach is intended to emancipate desire rather than to control or to destroy desire like the Buddhist position.

Due to the sensual conception of desire by the Nikāya Buddhists, they often refer to desire within the context of discussing the nature of the human body, an impermanent substance that is characterized by suffering and bondage. Desire and lust are fetters of the body that cause one to be attached to the body.[39] An aspirant can only gain freedom from the body by practising: 'That restraint of desire and lust, that putting away of desire and lust that are in body, that is the escape from body.'[40] This is accomplished by contemplating the nature of the body and its various constituent parts, a method that leads one to see only ugliness in the body.[41] According to Deleuze and Guattari, desire, a synthesis of desiring-machines is not a fetter of the body, but it is rather a productive force that must be liberated by means of schizoanalysis, a method of scouring the unconscious in order to destroy the Oedipus and any illusion of an ego. When using this approach, the schizoanalyst is a mechanic of a strictly functional method that must remember that all desiring-machines exist within social machines and vice versa.[42] The interrelationship between these different machines is reflected in a basic principle of schizoanalysis 'that desire is always constitutive of a social field.'[43] This entire process is viewed by the authors as potentially revolutionary.

Unconcerned with revolutionary rhetoric, the Nikāya Buddhists not only devoted time to analysing and controlling desire,

but they also spent considerable effort in classifying it with other things that is suggestive about their understanding of the nature of desire. The desire for sense pleasures arises in consciousness in conjunction with four other hindrances (*nivaraṇāni*): malevolence; sloth and torpor; restlessness and worry; doubt or perplexity.[44] Desire or attachment to sense pleasures is included in the list of the five mental bondages.[45] Desire is also included in the classification of the four cankers or corruptions (*āsavās*) that includes attachment to becoming, attachment to false views, and ignorance.[46] Desire is classified as a member of the four graspings (*upādāna*) along with grasping of opinion, grasping of rule and ritual, and grasping of the theory of the self.[47] Sense desire, enmity, and cruelty are referred to as either the three bad elements (*dhātu*) or the three bad thoughts (*vitakka*).[48] Moreover, desire is listed among the seven kinds of latent bias: enmity; false opinion; doubt; conceit; lust for rebirth; ignorance; and sensual passion (*kāmarāgānusaya*).[49] And finally it is included in a more metaphorical list called the four floods (*cattarō oghā*): sensual desires; life renewed; error; ignorance.[50]

Due to the intimate connection of desire and sense pleasure, the Nikāya Buddhists identified the five strands of desire (*kāmaguṇās*) material shapes; sounds; smells; tastes, touches.[51] These five strands give rise to sensuous pleasures that further increase sensuous desires and excite one's passions. There are also three uprisings of desires (*kāmaupapattiyo*) that are directly connected to the senses: sense desires that are connected with objects and are in bondage to such desires; desires for things that one creates; desires for the creation of others.[52]

In a sense, by classifying desire and other things, the Buddhists are taking things apart and analysing their constituent elements and seeing how they fit into larger patterns with other related items. The basic objective is to liberate oneself from craving, desire and ignorance. Although their philosophical presuppositions are different from those of the Buddhist thinkers, the method of schizoanalysis for Deleuze and Guattari does something akin to the basic Buddhist method by dissecting egos and their presuppositions. Deleuze and Guattari understand this process as liberating because it unlocks and mobilizes the flow of desire.[53] And if Nirvāna represents liberation

for the Buddhists and is defined as without desire itself, the postmodernists can rightfully ask the Buddhists the following question: Is it possible to desire Nirvāna? A timely answer is provided by Collins: 'It would be better to talk of the aspiration to nirvana rather than the desire for it, of purposive action as intentionally oriented towards its goal rather than as desiring it.'[54]

From another perspective, Derrida claims that the Buddhist classifications of desire are inadequate because various kinds of genres are impermanent. Derrida is opposed to all principles of order, including especially the ordering power of reason, because all forms of classification are confusing in nature by belonging to a genre without belonging, and thus their distinctions are not very helpful.[55] The Nikāya Buddhists agree to a large degree with Derrida about the impermanent nature of such classifications, but they also think that classifying desire in various ways assists one's understanding of its nature and contributes to a person's ability to control it. By classifying desire with related phenomena, the Nikāya Buddhists wanted to demonstrate its active nature, its impulsive character, its ability to ensnare one within its web of attachment, and its power for motivating one to cling to it and future desires. And yet they also want to demonstrate its inability to provide permanent satisfaction, its transient and evanescent character, and its power to bind one to the cycle of existence.

If desire leads to bondage for the Buddhists, its flow leads to personal, social, economic, and political emancipation for Deleuze and Guattari. Desire is revolutionary for them because 'Desire does not "want" revolution, it is revolutionary in its own right, as though involuntarily, by wanting what it wants.'[56] Instead of freeing oneself of ignorant craving and the negative impulses that feed the unconscious and shape our consciousness as advocated by the Buddhists, Deleuze and Guattari think that we must free ourselves from the process of oedipalization and its repression of productive desire. For the Nikāya Buddhists, an increase of one's desires is a non-productive way to respond to life, whereas Deleuze and Guattari find this a very productive response. By stressing the coercive nature of capitalism and the ideology of psychoanalysis, which are slave moralities from the philosophical perspective of Nietzsche and repress life-affirming desire, the economic, political and this-worldly concerns of Deleuze and Guattari are far removed from the basic orientation of Nikāya Buddhism which tends to be inner-directed.

ŚAṄKARA AND LACAN

From Śaṅkara's philosophical perspective, desires originate in unconscious impressions (*vāsanās*) that influence karmic residues within the mind, which in turn shape the development of karmic potentials. These unconscious impressions or tendencies (vāsanās) can be traced back to the former mode of existence of the *jīva* (soul, self) along with karmic deposits and desires. At the moment of death, the jīva is influenced by its karmic residues to develop vāsanās that determine its future mode of being. Therefore, the jīva is able to establish a link between its former body and its new physical form by means of its vāsanās. The interrelationship between the various elements can be summarized as follows: 'Without desires the *vāsanās*, or tendencies, will not be carried through into action, and without functioning *vāsanās* the karmic residues cannot determine birth, length of life, experiences.'[57] Thus mental impressions eventually develop into desires that are the direct cause of actions, and these actions never cease until knowledge dawns or enlightenment occurs, which is the only event that can satisfy one's desires and bring actions to a halt.[58] If it is only the enlightenment experience or knowledge of Brahman for Śaṅkara that terminates desires, this implies that all benighted individuals are subject to the power of desires.

In contrast to Śaṅkara, Jacques Lacan argues that it is desire, which he connects with the unconscious, that structures the human world.[59] The unconscious is characterized by discontinuity and vacillation that is equated in turn with language.[60] Within this metonymic system of signification, the unconscious plays the role of a signifier that reveals itself to consciousness, a signified, by means of substitute representations, which are not related to the unconscious. Since the unconscious is merely arbitrarily connected to consciousness, there is an ontological gap between them that makes it extremely difficult to recover the unconscious, even though it does become manifested in

speech in ways that are still difficult to discern because it takes the form of a chain of signifiers. It is for this reason that Lacan equates the unconscious with the Other. Due to the pre-ontological nature of the gap between unconsciousness and consciousness and its priority over the ontology of the self, this makes it difficult to discuss ontology with any precision for Lacan, whereas this is not the case with Śaṅkara's because of his concept of the interrelationship between the consciousness and unconsciousness and the role of desire.

Śaṅkara equates desire with the origin of evil: 'The enemy of the whole world is desire, from which all the evil comes to living being'.[61] There is no dualism of good and evil in Śaṅkara's philosophy because, if mental impressions develop into desires that cause actions, the roots of evil are within the unenlightened person. In contrast, Lacan associates desire with an inexpressible lack, but he does not connect this lack with evil: 'Desire is a relation of being to lack. This lack is the lack of being properly speaking. It isn't the lack of this or that, but lack of being whereby the being exists.'[62] By defining desire in relational and ontological terminology, Lacan wants to point to a primordial rupture that develops early in the life of a human being where one develops two images of the self: a fragmented self and a contrasting mirror image of a unified self. These two sharply contrasting images cannot be reconciled because 'This lack is beyond anything which can represent it. It is only ever represented as a reflection on a veil.'[63] For Śaṅkara, desire does not possess a true ontology like it does for Lacan because there is only a single, unique being for the Indian philosopher that does not include desire as a constituent part.[64]

Since desire causes action (karma) and increases due to greed and obsession with objects of sense for Śaṅkara, it is the cause of rebirth (saṃsāra).[65] In some texts Śaṅkara connects desire directly with ignorance (avidyā): 'A result of action is inconstant, since it has nescience and desire as its cause.'[66] This gives us a compound of ignorance (avidyā), desire (kāma), and action (*karman*) that forms a direct casual sequence.[67] Śaṅkara's clarity at this point is not shared by Lacan who explains himself in more paradoxical terms. Lacan envisions a primitive alienation within a subject before the advent of language in which desire exists in a projected, alienated other.

This validates desire and leads to an absolute rivalry and radical aggression toward the other that can only end with its destruction, even though it supports the desire of the aggressor. Since human coexistence is impossible in this kind of scenario, the subject and the other are saved by inhabiting a world of language and speech that allows for the mediation of desire and the avoidance of violence.[68] The subject realizes his desire in the other 'not so much because the other holds the key to the object desired, as because the first object of desire is to be recognized by the other.'[69] Thus the desire of the other is the subject's desire that enters into the mediation of language.

According to Śaṅkara, besides its internal nature for the individual as a modification (*vṛtti*) of the mind,[70] desire possesses an external aspect: 'Desire (*kāma*) is the longing for a pleasure-giving agreeable object of our experience when coming within the ken of our senses, heard of, or remembered; and anger (*krodha*) is the aversion for the disagreeable, for the cause of pain, when being seen, heard of, or remembered. The impulse of desire (*kāma*) is the agitation of the mind. . . .'[71] Thus desire is directly connected with an object of perception or knowledge much like any other external object. Lacan does not think that desire, a phenomenon of linguistic displacement, is simply connected with external objects because it cannot be concretized by language, but can only be indicated by the intervals of language or what it cannot represent. This is made more complex by the fact that desire, a basic discrepancy between biological need and demand, wants nothing that it can name.[72] Moreover, desire cannot be fully disclosed because it represents the foundation of language.

The objective or subjective natures of desire, which are considered impurities (*aśuddhi*) by Śaṅkara, cannot be attributed to the self, a non-phenomenal and non-temporal Ātman or Brahman.[73] A person recognizing the unity of the self with Brahman possesses no desires, since objects of desire cease to exist once enlightenment arises and liberates the individual. If the eternal self is always present for Śaṅkara within the individual like an undiscovered true identity, for Lacan being comes into existence due to the lack associated with desire: 'Being attains a sense of self in relation to being as a function of this lack, in the experience of desire.'[74] The only lack associated

with the self for Śaṅkara is the need for proper knowledge (*para vidyā*) concerning the true nature of the self.

Śaṅkara suggests that a necessary condition for the development of desire is difference, which is not all that distinct from the position of Lacan and his emphasis on the other. This becomes clear in Lacan's work when he discusses desire in relation to satisfaction and love: 'Thus desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second, the phenomenon of their splitting (*Spaltung*).'[75] As long as difference exists for Śaṅkara, desire will tend to predominate and overwhelm the individual. Nevertheless, a unitive experience that transcends all distinctions and is grounded in Brahman terminates the power of desires: 'Besides, since desire cannot rise with regard to oneself, owing to non-difference, there ensues liberation consisting in existence in one's own Self.'[76] In response to a philosophical opponent claiming that Brahman possesses desires, who could just as well have been a postmodernist, Śaṅkara replies: 'Not so, for It is independent. Such defects as desire cannot impel Brahman to action, just as they do others, by subjecting them to their influence.[77]

Besides a prevalence of ignorance, Śaṅkara perceives desire as a primary reason for our bondage to the world and subjection to the cycle of suffering. If sense object and selfish actions increase desires and eventually lead to rebirth, one can destroy them by viewing everything as Brahman. In other words, instead of seeing nothing but difference like some postmodern thinkers, Śaṅkara instructs us to see the unity and oneness of everything. The result of this kind of practice is: 'With the cessation of selfish action the brooding on the sense-objects is stopped, which is followed by the destruction of desires. The destruction of desires is liberation, and this is considered liberation-in-life'.[78] Before one can begin an inquiry into Brahman, there are certain preliminary conditions that one must meet: (1) discriminate between what is eternal and what is non-eternal; (2) renunciation of all desires to enjoy the fruits of one's actions; (3) acquisition of self-restraint and tranquillity; (4) a desire for liberation.[79] Thus the only permissible and positive desire for Śaṅkara, which is suggested by his philosophy at this juncture, is the desire for release from the bonds of the world, which can

only be accomplished by knowledge of Brahman, the single, eternal, universal principle. Once all ephemeral desires are rejected and overcome, one intuitively sees one's true self or Ātman, a real self that is unstained by any desires or aversions, and attains immortality.[80] Finally, Śaṅkara can write: 'As I am none other than the supreme and eternal One I am always satisfied [and] I have no desire.'[81] A unitive, desireless state that is beyond the sphere of the cycle of forever greedy and unsatiable grasping is the preferable condition for Śaṅkara. A desireless condition does not seem to be a viable possibility for Lacan. The basic human problem for Lacan is not that we are ignorant of the nature of our true self, but we are rather in a state of nescience with regard to our desires, a position diametrically opposed to that of Śaṅkara.[82] Moreover, according to Lacan, desire indicates the impossibility of finding a coherent self.

ABHINAVAGUPTA AND DESIRE TRANSFORMED

Unlike the previously discussed Upaniṣadic thinkers, Nikāya Buddhists, and Śaṅkara who view desire as something to be controlled or overcome and not conductive to spiritual advancement, Abhinavagupta gives us a much different view of desire in Indian philosophy in which desire is transformed from a hindrance into a positive vehicle of liberation, representing a path of freedom by means of enjoyment (bhoga). By using desire, worldly pleasures, and their enjoyment to partly form the *Kaula* path, the aspirant can indulge one's desires, enjoy the sensual pleasures associated with these desires, giving one a preview of eternal bliss, and still attain liberation (mokṣa), a path towards unity that represents an essential union of knower, known, and knowing. From the perspective of Lacan, pleasure is limiting in the sense that it restricts the scope of human possibility due to the homeostatic nature of the pleasure principle, whereas desire finds its limit, is sustain by it, and moves beyond the pleasure principle.[83] In contrast, Abhinavagupta's utilization of desire is made possible by the Tantric metaphysics of his system.

Within the metaphysical complex, the power of the androgynous God Śiva, representing the *akula* or the non-dual being,

vibrates, (spanda) throughout the entire universe and through human beings, microcosmic replicas of the supreme God, whereas His Śakti (feminine power) is *kula* or the totality of universal existence.[84] The macrocosmic desire of Śiva, which originates from his power (Śakti), is located within the individual bodies of human beings, giving human desire a legitimate foundation for higher forms of use.[85] Rather than a unified source of power, Lacan's concept of desire takes shape on the margin, a location of the separation of demand from need.[86] Since the power (Śakti) of Abhinavagupta's omniscient God permeates the universe and human beings in its five aspects as consciousness, bliss, will (*icchā*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and activity (*kriyā*),[87] humans are explicitly encouraged to actively participate in desire, an emotion in which the infinite is manifested. Because humans possess freedom to desire, this does not mean that they are slaves to their desires. This distinction is made lucidly by Dyczkowski:

> Desire is not denied, but accepted at a higher level as the pure will or freedom (*svātantrya*) of the absolute. Desire is to be eliminated only if it is desire 'for' (*ākāṅkṣā*), rather than desire 'to' (*icchā*).[88]

It is thus not necessary to become detached from desire for Abhinavagupta. It is, however, necessary to elevate human desire to a higher level of pure will by merging one's microcosmic will into the creative will of Śiva, vibrating throughout the cosmos and oscillating between a creative impulse and a dispassionate impulse from the created. Lacan's concept of desire is devoid of any metaphysical support like that provided in the philosophy of Abhinavagupta. Desire is sustained paradoxically by a prohibition that constitutes it and yet makes it impossible for desire to find final satisfaction. Lacan thinks that desire emerges from an inexpressible lack, a void associated with Freud's death instinct. Rather than the attempt that we find in Abhinavagupta's philosophy to elevate desire, Lacan's notion of desire is always encountering a limit.

The carnal use and elevation of desire is achieved in esoteric Tantric rites that use it in a controlled manner. The metaphysical background that forms the rationale for these rites is the akula (non-dual being) aspects of Śiva and the kula (totality of existence) aspect identified with the ultimate Śakti in union with

Śiva.[89] Although the ultimate relation between Śiva and Śakti is non-dual, their difference is traced to different perspectives by which humans grasp the same reality. Since the human body is a microcosm of the macrocosmic divine, the aspirant must unite these principles within oneself and realize *Anuttara*, the perfect unity of Śiva and Śakti and union of spiritual bliss.[90] This unitive bliss can be gained by means of sexual union (*maithuna*) between two consenting male and female partners. The latter should not be selected according to her caste or beauty, but she should rather be chosen because of her superior mental qualities.[91] The use of sexual intercourse to achieve one's goal should not be confused with the simple satisfaction of carnal desires. This controlled sexual union is a means to spiritual bliss in which desire is channelled to a higher end and not allowed to overflow and engulf the sexual partners.[92] Paradoxically, once the sexual partners transform themselves into a single desire, desire disappears and there is only bliss, giving one a foretaste of the bliss associated with the unitive experience with the eternal self.[93] If we can rightfully assume that the achievement of this state makes the existence of one or both of the partners meaningful for Abhinavagupta, a person's existence is made meaningful for Lacan by a desire for death which enables one to affirm oneself for others.[94]

The performance of the maithuna rite involves certain preliminary actions that involve purification of the body and ritual instruments, reciting of mantras (sacred formulas), worship of internal and external deities, drinking of wine, control of breath, meditation, continual recitation of God's names (*japa*), and offering of oblations to the sacrificial fire.[95] With these propaedeutic steps concluded, the *dūtī*, female partner who is ideally a feminine personification of Śakti with an excellent body and mind,[96] arrives for the secret part of the rite. In fact, stress is placed on the mental qualities of the dūtī because she is the door to expanded consciousness.[97] Both partners engage in mutually worshipping the inner organ, suggesting either the heart or sexual organ of the other person, and offering homage to the centres or wheels (*cakras*) running along the spinal cord within their bodies.[98] The cakras represent the inner realm of the physical body and mind that corresponds to the outer vibration of wheels of energy or cycles of divine creative activity

through, which moves the energy of divine consciousness, representing a microcosmic and macrocosmic symbol of totality. These wheels of conscious power unfold within the infinite consciousness of Śiva, and they are ideally in harmony with the evolution and involution of vibration (spanda) energy. Each cakra, which is a microcosm, possesses a definite number of spokes and symbols associated with radiant and vibrating energy of the macrocosm. From the lower centre at the base of the spinal cord, these five centres ascend on top of each other to the areas of the navel, heart, base of the neck or back of the throat, and finally to the fifth centre located between the eyebrows. The centres are connected through subtle centres of energy (*nāḍīs*).[99]

We can make sense of the partners offering homage to their inner organs when Abhinavagupta identifies the body with the beneficent *liṅga*, the location of divine energies and place of the highest worship (*pūjā*).[100] After having identified themselves respectively with Śiva and Ṣakti and invigorated themselves with forbidden food and drink, the practitioners are ready for sexual congress and to experience bliss (ānanda), an essential element of the nature of the supreme. The sexual partners must both paradoxically gratify their sexual desires and remain detached and self-controlled, while they transcend the phenomenal level of existence and ascend toward the realization of ānanda (bliss) connected with the union of Śiva and Śakti.[101] Within this unitive state of Anuttara, all duality disappears as one becomes a liberated and androgynous being.

In response to Abhinavagupta at this point, Lacan agrees that the phallus represents the privileged signifier of *Aufhebung* joining the logos with desire: 'The fact that the phallus is a signifier means that it is in the place of the Other that the subject has access to it.'[102] Although the phallus does not have the same metaphysical significance for Lacan as it does for Abhinavagupta, the former uses it as an organizing principle for all kinship and language that shapes all signification and meaning. Within the dialectic of desire, the phallus embodies *jouissance* and symbolizes the location of jouissance, not in itself, but it does this as a lack in the desired image.[103] This point is indicative of the alienation between desire and its signifier. This alienation can be witnessed in the fundamental rupture in the

life of each human subject from which desire develops. Desire is the nodal point for Lacan, a place where the pulsation of the unconscious is linked to sexual reality.[104]

LEVINAS, AUROBINDO, AND RADHAKRISHNAN

Emmanuel Levinas makes a distinction between desire and need. The former possesses the ability to disrupt and reorient us; it is excessive, exterior, strange, and other, whereas 'need' is a term used to refer to something that is lacking in a human situation. It is because a human need is not a simple lack or mere privation, that it holds out the promise of potential enjoyment. If we view desire and need within the context of time, we find that desire opens up an uncharted future for an individual, whereas the time of need is provided by desire.[105] Thus a need is dependent with respect to the other and across time. Levinas' notion of desire replaces the role of care in Heidegger's philosophy because when one desires, one is not connected with being, but is absorbed with the desirable, with an object that will totally satisfy one's desire. This suggests that desire possesses no further intentions beyond itself: 'The desirable is a terminus, an end.'[106] In a way similar to Levinas, Radhakrishnan does not locate desire in human unconsciousness in some kind of state of potency just waiting for an opportunity to control a person.[107] He does, however, link desire and ignorance, and asserts that desire is connected to the root of evil in the sense that it afflicts and imprisons the soul and obscures the intellect.[108] Radhakrishnan thinks that a human being possesses a higher purpose in life than to be a mere slave to desires. Aurobindo agrees with the spirit of Radhakrishnan's position, but he perceives the origin of desire as arising from the gap created by an impulse to possess something and the force of possession itself.[109] Aurobindo also links desire with strife and death, a trinity of divided existence, forming a three-fold mask of the divine life-principle, a cosmic energy that creates, maintains, and modifies.[110]

When a person satisfies his/her needs, this enjoyment of life renders a person independent, at home in the world, and constitutes a person as the same in contrast to the heteronomous, a more desirable situation from the perspective of Levinas. In

other words, enjoyment makes a person solitary and confirms the subject in its own identity in which it is comfortable with itself, but it is separated from others, although this autonomy is dependent upon the satisfaction of one's needs.[111] Even though it is possible to satisfy needs, it is impossible to satisfy desire because it can never be fulfilled for Levinas, a feature that radically differentiates it from needs because it wants the infinite. Radhakrishnan agrees with Levinas that desires cannot be satisfied, but he also emphasizes the need for their control. Unable to integrate certain goods for Levinas, desire is intensified as it moves closer to the desired—something impossible to become familiar with. Since a person for Levinas cannot integrate the desired, it assumes the character of exteriority and height, which suggests that one cannot convert it into something that one can own. There is always an unbridgeable distance between the desired other and the desiring subject which Levinas traces to the lack of an intentional structure within desire, a line of thinking indicative of the paradoxical nature of desire: separation and relation.[112] Aurobindo also sees the importance of the gap between the desired and the desiring subject; otherwise desire would not come into existence, leaving only a calm and self-possessed will devoid of craving.[113]

Levinas shares with Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan the desire for the absolute, a metaphysical desire that tends toward the absolutely other. Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan disagree with Levinas, however, when he claims that this desire for the invisible cannot be satisfied.[114] Aurobindo, for instance, writes, 'Desire too can only cease rightly by becoming the desire of the infinite and satisfying itself with a supernal fulfillment and an infinite satisfaction in all the all-possessing bliss of the Infinite.'[115] The rationale behind Levinas' position, that the desire for the invisible infinite cannot be satisfied, can be traced to two fundamental reasons. The closer that one comes to the desired the more one realizes the prodigious distance between oneself and it, and the more one becomes aware of the huge separation that belongs to the essence of the alterity of the Other. When Levinas refers to the exteriority, transcendence, and radical height of the infinite, something that thinks more than it thinks, he wants to call attention to the absolute alterity

of the Other, a transcendent, wholly Other that surpasses the comprehension powers of our intellect. From the neo-Vedāntic perspective of Radhakrishnan, the desire for Brahman is without cause, precedent, or expectation. It is possible to understand Levinas better by viewing his philosophy within the context of his reaction to the though of Heidegger.

Levinas is critical of Heidegger's analysis of Dasein's way of being-in-the-world because our social and worldly intercourse with other beings and things is not primarily as utilitarian as Heidegger would convince us. The world is not simply a context of useful tools ready-to-hand; it is an enjoyable place where we can savour its pleasures for Levinas by eating, drinking, and engaging in sexual activity. Therefore, life is to be enjoyed as much as possible as part of our search for happiness and our quest for the acquisition of an autonomous self or ego.[116] Along with Levinas, Radhakrishnan also recognizes a necessity for an outlet for desire. Within the context of discussing desire (kāma) as one of the four ends of life of classical Hinduism, Radhakrishnan states: 'Kāma refers to the emotional being of man, his feelings and desires. If man is denied his emotional life, he becomes a prey to repressive introspection and lives under a continual strain or moral torture.'[117] However, Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan can accuse Levinas rightly of legitimizing egocentrism, a phenomenon that forms the foundation for all types of hedonism. Nonetheless, Aurobindo grasps desire as 'the lever by which the divine life-principle effects its end of self-affirmation in the universe....'[118] The life-principle, a cosmic energy or force, initially expresses itself for Aurobindo in human life by desiring and destroying the other. It is later that desire becomes manifested as mutuality and love, a desire to give oneself to others and to receive love in exchange.

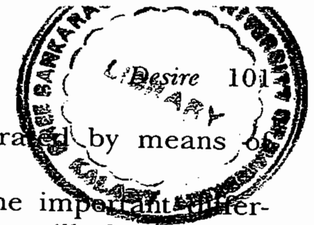
From the perspective of Levinas, egocentrism is necessary because without it there would not be any relationship with others, an encounter that necessitates an independent, free being.[119] Levinas thinks that a human being is more than a collection of needs, and that desire indicates something beyond the context of its own horizon. This suggests that any egocentric hedonism is relative and not absolute. Levinas' notion of desire ultimately directs one away from egocentric hedonism to the other, which makes one infinitely responsible for the existence

of the other with whom one can share one's possessions and thus give them meaning. Levinas elucidates this in the following statement: 'In desire the I is borne toward the other in such a way as to compromise the sovereign self-identification of the I, for which need is but nostalgia, and which the consciousness of need anticipates.'[120] Although Radhakrishnan agrees with Levinas' emphasis on the importance of responsibility for the other, he sees a danger in any form of excess, 'whether in the matter of pleasure or power, wealth or wisdom.'[121]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

According to some of the Upaniṣadic thinkers, desire plays a creative role in the cosmos, a position shared with Deleuze and Guattari and their emphasis on its life-affirming aspects. Both parties also agree that desire represents a driving force in human life. The differences, are, however, more significant. According to some Upaniṣadic thinkers, when the mind is subject to desire it is in a state of bondage. Some Upaniṣadic sages refer to desire as unreal, while the desire for the Ātman is real. From the perspective of the Upaniṣadic thinkers, Deleuze and Guattari present a one-dimensional view of the life and their conception of the self is displaced, impermanent, and decentred, which is completely at odds with the philosophers of the various Upaniṣadic texts. Some Upaniṣadic thinkers perceive a lack in desire, whereas Deleuze and Guattari assert that desire is not lacking anything, although a lack can be discovered within the subject. While many of the Upaniṣadic thinkers grasp a need to control desire, the postmodernist stress the need to liberate it from all controls by means of a process of oedipalization.

Deleuze and Guattari also advocate de-oedipalizing the human unconscious in order to emancipate and mobilize desire within the person, whereas Nikāya Buddhists want to control or ideally eradicate it because desire distorts mental powers, hinders meditation, and functions as an obstacle to individual perfection within the context of an interconnection with craving, although both sides agree that desire is interrelated and self-prepetuating. While the early Buddhists think that desire is a fetter of the human body, the postmodernists think that desire



is a productive force that must be liberated by means of schizoanalysis.

Even though his thought manifests some important differences from Deleuze and Guattari, as we will demonstrate shortly, Lacan thinks that desire structures the human world and is somewhat akin to Śaṇkara's view of the world. Śaṇkara and Lacan also agree that a necessary condition for the development of desire is difference, but this is where the dialogical agreement terminates. Śaṇkara views desire both externally as an object of knowledge or an object of pleasure and/or anger and internally as a force that modifies the mind, whereas Lacan argues that desire is not simply connected to external objects because he connects it to alienation, language, and the other, a position that makes it impossible to find a coherent self. In contrast to the postmodernist, Śaṇkara relates desire to action, rebirth, ignorance, and causation, although it does not have the true ontological status for Śaṇkara that it possesses for Lacan. While Śaṇkara associates desire with evil, Lacan equates desire with a lack and not with evil. If Lacan advocates embracing desire, Śaṇkara wants to find a desireless condition beyond the flux of the world.

Abhinavagupta transforms desire into a vehicle for liberation, whereas desire moves beyond the pleasure principle of Freudian theory for Lacan. Human desire possesses a metaphysical foundation for Abhinavagupta, while Lacan's notion of desire is without such a foundation because it is located on the margin. If Abhinavagupta thinks that it is necessary to elevate human desire, Lacan argues that desire is always encountering a limit. Not only does desire give meaning to life for Abhinavagupta, but it can also provide one with a foretaste of bliss that is connected to the unitive experience, whereas Lacan thinks that human existence becomes meaningful by a desire for death that enables one to affirm oneself for others. A final difference between these two thinkers is that the phallus possesses a metaphysical significance for Abhinavagupta and for Lacan it symbolizes jouissance.

With respect to the final group of philosophers that we engaged in dialogue, we called attention to the heteronomous and excessive nature of Levinas' notion of desire. In contrast, Radhakrishnan views desire as a potential danger that needs

to be controlled, whereas Aurobindo directly links desire with the life-principle. Levinas is at odds with the Indian thinkers over the possibility of satisfying the desire for the infinite, although all three thinkers share what might be called a metaphysical desire for the infinite. They also agree about the importance of an outlet for desire, although Radhakrishnan and Aurobindo are suspicious of any move towards an egocentric hedonism, even if it is a relative and not an absolute type of hedonism.

If we look at the positions of Deleuze, Guattari, and Lacan a little further, we will find that, besides the philosophical influence of Nietzsche, Hegel, and Marx, the largest shadow cast over the postmodernists discussed at length in this chapter is that of Freud. Even though it may be difficult to know the contents of the unconscious, it still functions for our postmodern thinkers as a reservoir for desire, a polysemic word that embodies sexual drive and a variety of forces that resist intra-psychic repression. We also know that our postmodernists reject Freud's claim that desire can be controlled by an ego because there is no point of jurisdiction other than desire.[122] Another general observation that can be made about the work of Deleuze, Guattari, and Lacan is that it is very political in content and objective because these philosophers view themselves as members of the revolutionary vanguard opposed to capitalism and Freudian psychoanalysis because both are slave moralities, whereas life-affirming desire is the path of emancipation.

There are, however, some important differences between Deleuze and Guattari and Lacan. The first two writers criticize Lacan's definition of desire as a lack. Deleuze and Guattari argue that when there is a lack of a real object, desire fills the void by supplying an imaginary object—a process that indicates the productive nature of desire and its ability to produce a kind of double reality in which a fantasized object exists behind every real object.[123] Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari claim that Lacan cannot account for the genealogy of the lack that is fundamental to his definition of desire. They also suggest that Lacan treats desire as a negativity and not as a generative affirmation of life. Deleuze and Guattari also differ from Lacan in their literary style by their choice of mechanistic and economic language, although all of them write in a style that tends to obscure rather than clarify a given point.

With the exception of Abhinavagupta, the Indian thinkers discussed in this chapter suggest that desire possesses the potential to interfere with the development of a person's path to liberation, and it is implied less vigorously that it can hinder one's rationality. Due to the fact that the postmodernists are attacking the problem from within the context of the history of western philosophy, the postmodernists approach the relationship between desire and rationality differently. Lacan thinks, for instance, that desire is unreasonable, and he finds the Hegelian assertion that the rational is the real an ironic presupposition.[124] The anti-Hegelianism of Lacan is shared by Deleuze and Guattari with their criticism of Hegel's claim that the state is the becoming of reason: 'Ever since philosophy assigned itself the role of ground it has been giving the established power its blessing, and tracing its doctrine of faculties onto the organs of State power.'[125] The state and the society that it embodies are more directly a result of irrational factors than they are of rational forces. Hence, Deleuze and Guattari advocate nomad thought, which is more concerned with exteriority and difference, instead of reason. Unlike reason, nomad thought does not reduce the many to some common identity; rather, it is able to synthesize differences without destroying their heterogeneity. The observation made by Spinoza centuries ago, about the tendency of desire to undergo irrational attractions and repulsions, is embraced rather than avoided by many postmodern thinkers. We will discuss the postmodern assault upon rationality and its role in Indian philosophy more fully in a subsequent chapter.

ENDNOTES

1. Brown, pp. 29–30; J. Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens I: Veda and älterer Hinduismus* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1960), p. 181.
2. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 129.
3. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 295.
4. Chauncey J. Blair, *Heat in the Rig Veda and Atharva Veda*, American Oriental Series, Vol. 45 (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1961), p. 102.

5. See Walter O. Kaelber, *Tapta Mārga: Asceticism and Initiation in Vedic India* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1989) and David M. Knipe, *In the Image of Fire* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975).

6. Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, Vols II & III, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p. 113.

7. Bataille, *The Tears of Eros*, trans. Peter Connor (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1990), p. 66; *Accursed Share*, Vols II & III, p. 29.

8. Bataille, *Death and Sensuality: A Study of Eroticism and the Taboo* (New York: Walker and Company, 1962).

9. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 2.

10. Ibid. p. 29.

11. Ibid. p. 24.

12. Ibid. p. 5.

13. Ibid. p. 380.

14. Ibid. p. 20.

15. Ibid. p. 26. In diametrical opposition to the affirmative and productive definition of desire given by Deleuze and Guattari, Jean-François Lyotard, a leading postmodern theorist, understands desire as a force that attempts to free itself from itself 'because desire is intolerable' (p. 29) in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

16. Deleuze and Guattari, p. 26.

17. Ibid. p. 25. Judith P. Butler interprets their definition of desire to include the idea of an exchange that increases and intensifies energy and power into a state of excess (p. 213) in *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987). This interpretation appears to be mistaken because Deleuze and Guattari deny that desire represents an exchange (*Anti-Oedipus*, p. 186).) Desire is concerned only with theft and gift, which appears to support Butler's interpretation. The postmodernists answer, however, 'It is theft that prevents the gift and the countergift from entering into an exchangest relation' (*Anti-Oedipus*, p. 186).

18. We find the following ideas expressed in a number of historically later texts: burns up or away desire, *Turiyātitāvadhūta Upaniṣad*, 1, *Nāradaparivrājaka Upaniṣad*, 2, *Bṛhat-Saṃnyāsa Upaniṣad*, 2; forsake it, *Paramahaṃsaparivrājaka Upaniṣad*, 4; turn away from desire, *Nāradaparivrājaka Upaniṣad*; snap the cord of desire's web, *Bṛhat-Saṃnyāsa Upaniṣad*, 2 and *Kṣurikā Upaniṣad*, 25; bonds of desire, *Bṛhat-Saṃnyāsa Upaniṣad*, 2; give up desire, *Āruṇeya Upaniṣad*, 4, *Paramahaṃsa Upaniṣad*, 2; desires are like vomit, *Maitreya Upaniṣad*, 3.9.

19. Deleuze and Guattari, p. 119.

20. Ibid., p. 79. Unlike Deleuze and Guattari, Michel Foucault argues that desire is not repressed by a juridical law and does not originate from some basically repressed human drive. It is the repressive law that creates desire which grounds it in history: 'Whether desire is this or that, in any case one continues to conceive of it in relation to a power that is always juridical and discursive, a power that has its central point in the enunciation of the law' (pp. 89–90). Since there is no desire exterior to discourse, desire is involved in power relations because there is no discourse outside of relationships of power (pp. 20–3). This indicates that desire and power are coextensive, an argument that is neither clearly articulated by Deleuze and Guattari nor Lacan. For Foucault's position on this point, see *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage/Random House, 1980).

21. *Middle Length Sayings*, 3.63.

22. *The Guide* (*Netti-Ppakaraṇam according to Kaccāna Thera*), trans. Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, Pali Text Society 33 (London: Luzac and Company, Ltd., 1962), p. 95; *Dialogues of the Buddha*, 3.1.216; *The Book of the Gradual Sayings*, 5 vols, trans. F. I. Woodward and E. M. Hare (London: Luzac and Company Ltd., 1962–72), 5.57.

23. Deleuze and Guattari, p. 8.

24. *The Guide*, pp. 24, 40.

25. *Book of Gradual Sayings*, 4.328.

26. Lamotte, p. 39. Kalupahana states that the Buddhist philosophy of causation 'avoids strict determinism and chaotic indeterminism' (p. 117). He bases this opinion on the *Samyutta-Nikāya* (2.17); see also his *Causality: The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1975).

27. *Dialogues of the Buddha*, 3.1.218.

28. *Middle Length Sayings*, 1.130.

29. Deleuze and Guattari, p. 5.

30. Ibid., p. 315. Butler thinks that Deleuze and Guattari undermine their original intention to historicize desire, 'for this arcadian vision of precultural libidinal chaos poses as an ahistorical absolute' (p. 215).

31. Kalupahana, *History*, p. 95.

32. Derrida, *Psyché*, pp. 390–2.

33. Ibid., p. 392.

34. Grace G. Burford, 'Theravāda Buddhist Soteriology and the Paradox of Desire', in *Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and its Transformations in Buddhist Thought*, eds Robert E. Buswell, Jr and Robert M. Gimello, Studies in East Asian Buddhism 7 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), p. 48.

35. For a fuller discussion of this topic, see Bruce Matthews, *Craving and Salvation: A Study in Buddhist Soteriology*, Studies in Religion

Supplements 13 (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1983), pp. 74–92.
36. *Middle Length Sayings*, 2.173.
37. Deleuze and Guattari, pp. 81–2.
38. Ibid., pp. 107–8.
39. *The Book of the Kindred Sayings (Sanyutta-Nikāya)*, 5 vols, trans. Mrs Rhys Davids and F. L. Woodward (London: Luzac and Company, Ltd., 1954–72), 3.166.
40. Ibid., 3.62.
41. *The Guide*, p. 83.
42. Deleuze and Guattari, p. 322.
43. Ibid., p. 348.
44. *The Expositor (Atthasālini)*, 2 vols, trans. Pe Maung Tin and ed. Mrs Rhys Davids (London: Luzac and Company, Ltd., 1958), II: 539; *Middle Length Sayings*, 1.144, 2.203; *Gradual Sayings*, 5.60; *Dialogues of the Buddha*, 3.2.234.
45. *Middle Length Sayings*, 1.101–2.
46. *Middle Length Sayings*, 1.7; *Dialogues of the Buddha*, 3.1.216; *The Book of Analysis* (*Vibhanga*), trans. Pathamakyaw Ashin Thittila (London: Luzac and Company, Ltd., 1969), 373.
47. *Book of Gradual Sayings*, 2.3; *Dialogues of the Buddha*, 3.1.230.
48. *Dialogues of the Buddha*, 3.1.215.
49. Ibid., 3.2.254.
50. Ibid., 3.1.230.
51. *Middle Length Sayings*, 1.85.
52. *Dialogues of the Buddha*, 3.12.18.
53. Deleuze and Guattari, p. 362.
54. Steven Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 186.
55. Jacques Derrida, 'The Law of Genre', trans. Avital Ronnell, in *On Narrative*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 51–77.
56. Deleuze and Guattari, p. 116.
57. Karl H. Potter, *Advaita Vedānta up to Śaṃkara and His Pupils*, Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies, ed. Karl H. Potter (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 33.
58. Śaṅkara, *Commentary on Taittiriya Upaniṣad*, 1.1; 1.4. In contrast to Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja finds another way of referring to the origin of desires by claiming that they arise from the *rajas guṇa* (energetic strand). If the development of desires are hindered, this can eventuate in anger, which motivates Rāmānuja to resort to a combustion metaphor: 'A creature is enveloped in desire, as fire is in smoke: desire, which is insatiable by objects and therefore unending, envelops the knowledge of the Ātman that an individual conjoined with prakrti possesses by nature' (3.37–9). Once desire arises for Rāmānuja, it is supported by the senses, mind (*manas*), and intellect (*buddhi*, 3.40) in *Rāmānuja on the Bhagavadgītā*, trans. J. A. B. van Buitenen (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1968).

59. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954–1955*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller and trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (New York, London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1977), p. 299.
60. Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1988), p. 224.
61. Śaṅkara, *The Bhagavad Gītā with the Commentary of Sri Sankarachārya*, trans. A. Mahadeva Sastri (Madras: V. Ramaswamy Sastrulu & Sons, 1972), 3.37.
62. Lacan, *Seminar II*, p. 223. Emmanuel Levinas is indirectly critical of Lacan's definition of desire as a lack: 'Desire does not coincide with an unsatisfied need; it is situated beyond satisfaction beyond nonsatisfaction. The relationship with the Other, or the idea of Infinity, accomplishes it' (p. 179) in *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Eighth Printing (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1990).
63. Lacan, *Seminar II*, p. 223.
64. Levinas calls into question the ontological nature of desire as defined by Lacan because there is no ontological real thing connected to desire by which one can be satisfied (p. 117) in *Totality and Infinity*.
65. Śaṅkara, *Vivekachudamani of Shri Shankaracharya*, trans. Swami Madhavananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1966), pp. 313–15.
66. Śaṅkara, *Upadeśasāhasrī*, 1.17.8).
67. Ibid., 1.15.21; *Vedānta Sūtras*, 1.2.17.
68. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique 1953–1954*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller and trans. John Forrester (New York, London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1988), pp. 170–1.
69. Lacan, *Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis*, trans. Anthony Wilden (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 31.
70. Śaṅkara, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 2.4.6.
71. Idem, *Bhagavad Gītā*, 5.23.
72. Lacan *Seminar II*, p. 223.
73. Śaṅkara, *Upadeśasāhasrī*, II.2.36, 70.
74. Lacan, *Seminar II*, pp. 223–4.
75. Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 287.
76. Śaṅkara, *Commentary on Taittiriya Upaniṣad*, 1.11.4.
77. Ibid., 2.61.
78. Śaṅkara, *Vivekachudamani*, p. 317.

79. Śaṅkara, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 1.1.1 Levinas shares the spirit of the position of Śaṅkara when he writes about the desire for the invisible, which is a metaphysical desire that tends toward the absolutely other (pp. 33–4) in *Totality and Infinity*. The Indian philosophers examined in this chapter disagree, however, with Levinas when he claims that this desire for the invisible cannot be satisfied.

80. Śaṅkara, *Upadeśasāhasrī*, 1.17.47.

81. Ibid., 1.19.3.

82. Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 312.

83. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller and trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1981), p. 31.

84. L. N. Sharma, *Kashmir Śaivism* (Varanasi: Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, 1972), p. 58.

85. Abhinavagupta, *Parātriṃśikālaghuvṛtti*, trans. A. Padoux (Paris: E. De Boccard, 1965), p. 17.

86. Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 311.

87. Kṣemarāja, *The Doctrine of Recognition: A Translation of Pratyabhijñahṛdayam*, trans. Jaideva Singh (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 4.1.6.

88. Dyczkowski, p. 39.

89. Abhinavagupta, *Tantrāloka*, 5.68.

90. Ibid., 5.356.

91. Ibid., 29.101.

92. Ibid., 29.67.

93. Lilian Silburn, *Kuṇḍalinī: The Energy of the Depths*, trans. Jacques Gontier (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 138.

94. Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 105.

95. Abhinavagupta, *Tantrāloka*, 29.16–58.

96. Ibid., 29.68–71.

97. Ibid., 29.122–3.

98. Ibid., 29.105.

99. Silburn offers a more detailed account in *Kuṇḍalinī*, pp. 25–32.

100. Abhinavagupta, *Tantrāloka*, 29.171.

101. Ibid., 29.78–80.

102. Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 288.

103. Ibid., pp. 319–20.

104. Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 154.

105. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 117.

106. Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), p. 37.

107. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1932; Second Edition, 1957), p. 216.

108. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940), pp. 95, 106.

109. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, 2 vols. Sixth Edition (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1970), I: 196.

110. Ibid., p. 197.

111. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 115.

112. Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, p. 39.

113. Aurobindo, p. 196.

114. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, pp. 33–4.

115. Aurobindo, p. 195.

116. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 137.

117. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 353.

118. Aurobindo, p. 195.

119. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 134.

120. Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhff Publishers, 1987), p. 94.

121. S. Radhakrishnan, *East and West in Religion* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1933), p. 53.

122. Edith Wyschogrod, *Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 234.

123. Deleuze and Guattari, p. 25.

124. Levinas, *Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis*, p. 55.

125. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 376.



Suffering, Abjection, and Death

In general, the people of ancient Vedic culture in India were focused on their well-being in this world and held a positive view of life within the world. In other words, the human situation was not an insurmountable burden to bear for individuals because life was not considered excessively painful or full of sorrow. The ancient literature does, however, manifest evidence of poets praying to become free of certain common maladies. A poet prays, for instance, to become free of fever (AV 5.22.1–2). Another poet prays to be free of headache, earache, consumption, blindness, disease, jaundice, intestinal pain, rheumatic pain, or eye disease (AV 9.8.1–20). The Upaniṣad texts give more attention to pain and sorrow, although not to any excessive extent.

Old age, disease, death, and rebirth are mentioned in the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* (4.3.36), which is probably the oldest Upaniṣad text. This text embodies the teachings of the great sage Yājñavalkya, who tended to stress the importance of desire in the process of suffering. He directly connects rebirth (saṃsāra) with the desirous person. Since desire (kāma) stimulates the will to action and actions determine the fate of one's embodied condition after death and subsequent rebirth, a person's current and future condition are determined by one's actions and desires. If desire shapes the deed that one

performs, one's action determines one's fate according to the inexorable law of karma (BĀU 4.4.5). Because desire shapes one's deeds and leads one to eventual rebirth, one can extricate oneself from this situation by eliminating desire which will in turn stop rebirth. The way to effect this situation is through knowledge, an intuitive awareness that the self (Ātman) and Brahman (ultimate reality) are non-dual. Those who gain this knowledge become immortal, while others experience suffering (BĀU 4.4.14). The predominant themes expressed by Yājñavalkya and like-minded thinkers, such as karma, rebirth, suffering, and liberating power of knowledge, were to help form the Indian worldview and culture and are necessarily repeated, refined and developed in subsequent Indian philosophy. The philosophy of Yājñavalkya makes suffering more tolerable because it does not allow pain to become absurd, giving it a cause and a meaning within the context of the law of karma. By giving suffering an opportunity to find a meaning, it gains a more positive value.[1]

Within the context of the universal law of causation, the law of karma, which is grounded in ethical considerations, represents a particular aspect of causation that elucidates moral phenomenon. The law of karma reflects the very nature of reality, which suggests that it is a metaphysical doctrine that presupposes the possibility of numerous individual rebirths and is substantially non-verifiable.[2] Whenever a person intentionally acts, he/she creates a karmic residue (*karmaśaya*) that is either positive or negative, according to dharma or opposed to it (*adharma*). This karmic residue has important implications because it 'is accompanied by dispositional tendencies (*saṃskāra*) of more than one sort, including at least two kinds of traces (*vāsanā*), one kind which, if and when it is activated, produces a memory of the originating act, the other which, if and when it is activated, produces certain afflictions (*kleśa*).'[3] Therefore, one's present condition is a result of past actions and the moral character of the past actions. This does not necessarily preclude the possibility of freedom and creativity for the individual.[4] Nonetheless, upon the death of the individual, the karmic residues determine in what circumstances one is reborn until one frees oneself from the cycle of causation, which becomes perceived as a mode of suffering for the individual.

And the theme of suffering (dukkha) reaches its culmination in Nikāya Buddhism where it becomes the basic presupposition about human existence.

Within this historical heritage of ideas about suffering and its cause, Indian philosophies offer not only views (*darśanas*) about the condition of life, but they are also means to liberation (mokṣa) and solutions to the problems of human existence. Even if suffering is universal for a number of Indian philosophies, there is some way to extricate oneself from its pervading grip, which suggests that suffering is never final. Moreover, the universal nature of suffering acknowledged by many Indian thinkers did not lead to philosophies of pessimism.[5] The same thing cannot be said about a number of postmodern philosophies.

The influence of Bataille on postmodern thinking is evident in his heterological theory of knowledge, which is opposed to any homogeneous representation of the world, because it leads to a complete reversal of the philosophical process. Instead of philosophy being a means of appropriation, it now becomes an instrument of excretion and is better able to grasp a world that is continually ejecting its contents.[6] With its anal focus, this new type of philosophy helps one to concentrate on the dirt and waste of human existence. It also helped to shape Kristeva's understanding of abjection, which I propose as one example of a postmodern form of suffering. In this chapter, I want to engage Kristeva and her concept of abjection in hermeneutical dialogue with the philosophy of Nikāya Buddhism and some selected Hindu philosophers. And because death symbolizes suffering so thoroughly, we will also compare the position of Nikāya Buddhist philosophy with selected postmodern thinkers. Finally, we will balance this chapter by including a comparison of the position of Radhakrishnan, a contemporary Hindu philosopher, with the postmodernist thinking of Bataille and Blanchot.

SUFFERING AND NIKĀYA BUDDHISM

In the Pali texts we find the term 'dukkha', which can be adequately translated as suffering, pain, sorrow, or misery. Collins claims that a more precise translation is frustration or unsatisfactoriness, a judgement based on certain soteriologically

oriented premises of Buddhism.[7] The reflective conclusion of Collins is elucidated further: 'Thus dukkha in Buddhist thought represents not a life-denying pessimism, but (part of) a specific soteriological project.'[8] Although Collin is correct in his assessment of the term, dukkha also includes the ideas of imperfection, impermanence, emptiness, and insubstantiality.[9] According to the early Buddhist philosopher Buddhaghosa, there are several types of suffering that include the following: aging; death; sorrow; lamentation; pain; grief; despair; association with disagreeable people: separation from those that one loves; unsatisfied needs or wants; and clinging to the five aggregates that form the false image of the self. This list allows us to see that suffering includes both physical and mental features.

According to Buddhaghosa, there are three aspects of dukkha: intrinsic suffering (*dukkha-dukkha*); suffering produced by change (*vipariṇāma-dukkha*); suffering due to formations (*saṇkhāra dukkha*). There are also concealed, exposed, indirect, and direct forms of suffering.[10] Intrinsic suffering includes individual bodily and mental feelings of pain, whereas suffering due to change and formations represent, respectively, changes from pleasant feelings to unpleasant ones and ever-changing physical and mental formations. An earache, toothache or fevers are examples of concealed suffering, while exposed suffering is an affliction obvious to one's perception like a person suffering from an incapacitating physical disease. With the exception of intrinsic suffering which is referred to as direct, all forms of suffering are called indirect because they form the basis for various forms of suffering.[11]

Bodily pain is often obvious to objective perceptual observation, but mental pain is not always so apparent to others. From the Buddhist perspective, consciousness (*viññaṇa*) is directly responsible for painful mental conditions—because it grows within the context of kammic activity, consciousness is shaped by its intentions:

> If, brethren, a man who is ignorant plans an act of merit, consciousness is on its way to merit; if he plans an act of demerit, consciousness is on its way to demerit; if he plans an act that is stationary, consciousness is on its way to that which is stationary. But when in a brother ignorance is banished and wisdom has arisen, because of the fading away of ignorance and the arising of wisdom, he does not plan an act of merit,

he does not plan an act of demerit, he does not plan an act that is stationary. Not planning, not willing, he grasps at nothing whatever in the world; not grasping he is not perturbed; unperturbed, he is of and by himself utterly well. And he knows that birth is perished. The divine life is lived.[12]

It is also evident from this quotation that consciousness plays an important function in determining present and future states of becoming. Due to its ability to transport energy and kammic results, consciousness carries these energies into a new mode of existence. According to Buddhaghosa, there is a rebirth-linking consciousness (*patisandhi-viññana*), which arises in a woman's womb as an initial stirring of consciousness at the exact moment of conception, that is conditioned by the final moment of consciousness (*cuti-viññana*) prior to death and propelled by residual ignorant craving. This causally connected stream of distinct moments of consciousness is like a sound and its echo for Buddhaghosa.[13]

Besides the role of consciousness in creating suffering, the unconscious and the latent tendencies (*anusaya*) hidden within it also play an important function. The Buddhist identify seven unconscious dispositions: sensual lust (*kāmārāgānusaya*); anger or resentment (*paṭighānusaya*); superstitious views (*diṭṭhānusaya*); doubt (*vicikicchānusaya*); conceit or pride (*mānānusaya*); egoistic impulses (*bhavarāgānusaya*); and ignorance (*avijjānusaya*).[14] These latent tendencies shape conscious craving and motivate consciousness to move toward the undesirable direction of clinging to sensual cravings and the impossibility of satisfying one's cravings. The latent tendencies overlap with the following unwholesome roots (*mūlā*); greed (*rāga*); hatred (*dosa*); and delusion (*moha*). These roots also shape consciousness and volitional activity. Another set of dispositions that are features of the unconscious are the three cankers (*āsavā*): sensuality (*kāmāsava*); becoming (*bhavāsava*); ignorance (*avijjāsava*). The last canker is the most fundamental because it prevents us from knowing the truth about the root cause of suffering, the termination of suffering, and the means of ending suffering.[15] Even though the unconscious latent tendencies, unwholesome roots, and cankers affect it, consciousness still possesses the ability to distinguish between pain and pleasure or happiness and suffering by means of its power of discrimination. If one has

been a slave to one's unconscious evils, consciousness can assist one to rise above mere sensation, manifesting the power of self-transcendence, and to recognize the impermanence of our sensual attachments and the world as a start to changing the way that one mistakenly structured one's life.

Although we will consider the subject in greater detail in the next chapter, it should be mentioned that the five aggregates that constitute the self are characterized as suffering.[16] Since consciousness represents one of the aggregates, this helps us to understand that there is no consciousness without a connection to a body, which suggests that consciousness possesses no independent status for early Buddhism.[17] Within the chain of causation linking ignorance and consciousness and representing the fourth aggregate of the self, the *saṅkhāra* (mental formations or dispositions) affects consciousness by functioning to select material from elements presented to consciousness with the intention of formulating one's comprehension of temporal reality, and it is a factor that contributes to the individuation of a person.[18] There is a presumption among Buddhists that a person does not always receive a true picture of the world, which contributes to the continuance of suffering.

The conscious and unconscious factors that contribute to suffering take place within a chain of causation (paṭiccasamuppāda) that renders everything relative and interdependent. The framework of this chain of causation makes it evident that it is not possible to isolate a single cause of suffering because each element in the chain of causation is dependent upon its predecessor. In response to a question about the origin of suffering in the *Dvayatānupassana-sutta* of the *Sutta-nipāta*, the Buddha replies from different perspectives that it is rebirth and ignorance, but he also gives eight other causes, including dispositions, consciousness, grasping, birth, inception of energy, nutrition, vacillation, and craving (taṇhā).[19] The Nikāya Buddhists do have, however, a tendency to identify taṇhā as the most immediate cause of suffering.

The term taṇhā is usually translated as craving or thirst. It is that which produces re-existence and re-becoming, and it is connected with passionate greed. Taṇhā can be viewed from three general positions: 'the craving for the life of sense, the craving for becoming (renewed life), and the craving for not

becoming (for no rebirth).'[20] In short, taṇhā is upādāna (attachment, grasping).[21] The term upādāna can be distinguished from taṇhā because the former term refers to the chronic condition of a person's will to which particular cravings lead an individual. Consequently, the more a person is entrapped in craving the greater the intensity for his/her entire existence to become dependent upon the transitory, insubstantial, and worthless conditions of life.[22] The more a person is bound by his/her cravings the more nearly one becomes like a slave. In this way, a creative Buddhist image is a spider that follows the web, which it makes for itself.[23]

The Pali texts identify three kinds of craving: sense pleasure (*kāma-taṇhā*); craving for becoming (*bhava-taṇhā*); and craving for non-existence (*vibhava-taṇhā*).[24] With respect to the craving for sense pleasure, the Buddha addressed a person named Dighanakha, a wandering ascetic, near the city of Rājagaha:

> As to this, Aggivessana, those recluses and brahmans who speak thus and are of this view. 'All is pleasing to me'—this view of theirs is close to attachment, close to the fetters, close to delight, close to cleaving, close to grasping.[25]

When a person becomes attached to sense pleasures he/she resembles a monkey wishing for fruit in a forest, bounding here and there hopelessly seeking to gratify his/her desire. Such a person's only recourse is to 'not follow pleasures of the sense because, through the destruction of attachment, he is without attachment.'[26] Craving for existence and becoming attached, in one's mind, to existence is like a suckling calf to its mother.[27] If one does not detach oneself from this craving, one will be reborn continually into this wretchedly contemptible world of becoming. If one finds the courage and fortitude to overcome this fierce craving, the sorrows of existence will fall off one by one like water drops from a lotus leaf.[28] The same path of detachment is to be followed for conquering the craving for non-existence.

If one's insatiable cravings can be eliminated, it is then possible to end suffering. And the Buddha advocated a path to follow in order to help one achieve this goal. This so-called eightfold path is designed to eliminate or control, as much as possible, excessive cravings because such unrestrained cravings

create negative habitual proclivities and unwholesome mental conditions that hinder concentration during the practice of meditation. But because the origin of suffering (dukkha) is located within itself, its cessation is also located within it: 'Whatsoever is of a nature to arise, all that is of a nature to cease.'[29] Thus embodied within suffering is the solution to its eradication. Therefore, it is unnecessary to look beyond suffering for a means to be free of it. It is only necessary to break its causal chain to become free of the cycle of suffering.

In contrast to some interpreters, the Buddha's teaching about suffering was not intended as a universal statement or all-inclusive truth. As Kalupahana demonstrates in his studies devoted to the subject, statements concerning suffering often appear with the relative pronoun 'this' (*idaṃ*), which serves to particularize a given statement: 'All this is suffering.' This approach gives the Buddha an opportunity to specify and develop the concept of suffering.[30] And it helps to avoid transforming all phenomena and actions into suffering. The fact of suffering, however, did serve to form the basic presupposition of Nikāya Buddhist philosophy.

ABJECTION

If dukkha is a term that indicates the prevalence of suffering in he world and within each person from the perspective of Nikāya Buddhism, Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection is an excellent example of a postmodern form of suffering. This postmodern type of suffering is an integral part of one's life because it originates in infancy and remains with one throughout one's life. When examining her concept of abjection, the influence of Lacan's psychology and Bataille's stress on excess and the need to rediscover the dirt of life will become evident in Kristeva's theoretical work.

Grounded in the pre-oedipal relationship between an infant and its mother, abjection is an attempt to separate from the mother before the autonomy of language and the accompanying revulsion and horror of the experience. Abjection is difficult to grasp because it is neither subject nor object. Although it is something that one experiences, there is an absence of a definite object that one can identify with it. Abjection is also difficult to

locate because it is not possible to know for certain if it exists inside or outside of us: 'There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable.'[31] Moreover, it approaches without ever arriving into our presence, which suggests that we must approach it in an indirect manner.

Abjection is something that one cannot recognize because it does not posses objectivity or meaning. If one did recognize it, one would be destroyed by it.[32] Kristeva tries to point indirectly to the nature of abjection by turning to a discussion of general categories of defilement, writing approvingly of the anthropological work of Mary Douglas on the subject, that approximately correspond to the human erotogenic drives of the oral, anal, and genital. The most archaic form of abjection is oral disgust when an infant refuses its mother's milk. Not only is the child rejecting the mother, it is also expelling itself and refusing its bodily limits. Faeces, urine, vomit, tears, and spit are all examples of bodily waste that provoke reactions of horror and disgust, and provides proof of an inability to acknowledge the material nature of the body. These bodily waste products also indicate an opposition between clean and unclean, proper and improper, order and disorder, and it draws a clear distinction between the inside and outside boundaries of the body. The horror provoked by menstrual blood is a good example of sexual difference, and represents 'the danger issuing from within the identity (social or sexual); it threatens the relationship between sexes within a social aggregate and, through internalization, the identity of each sex in the face of sexual difference.'[33] These various forms of defilement indicate a division between the subject and its body.

Along the lines of Bataille, Kristeva thinks that the refuse of life is very instructive:

> These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border, such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit—*cadere*, cadaver. If dung signifies the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits me to be, the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything.[34]

A person learns what must be discarded in order to live. The various waste products of the body inscribe themselves on the different surfaces of the body. And they, as foul objects generating abjection, indicate the impossibility of establishing lucid borders between opposites.

Abjection manifests a heterogeneous nature or what Kristeva calls a 'heterogeneity of significance.'[35] The heterogeneous something threatens us, summons us, and finally engulfs us, while it is also disturbing identity, system, and rejecting borders, positions, and rules.[36] These characteristics suggest its immoral, sinister, and terrifying aspects. There is something uncanny about abjection, which is beyond the unconscious, although Kristeva maintains that it is different from uncanniness.[37] It is a precondition of castration, which itself represents an attempt to conceal and expel abjection. The time of abjection is ambiguous because it is both periods of 'oblivion and thunder, of veiled infinity and the moment when revelation bursts forth.'[38]

Abjection is connected to narcissism because the former is a precondition of the latter, forming a receptacle of narcissism. Even if I recognize my image as a sign, this image represses the receptacle of narcissism, and desire drives the ego toward the other and appears to be a regression to some self-absorbed condition. Thus we can view abjection as an example of a narcissistic crisis by witnessing its ephemeral nature and giving narcissism an apparent classification.[39] The excessive strictness of the other and the lapse of the other are the dual contradictory causes of this narcissistic crisis. What these causes share in common is an attempt by the abject to support the ego within the other. This effort possesses a hopelessly tragic quality because: 'The abject is the violence of mourning for an "object" that has always already been lost.'[40]

We can catch a glimpse of the abject, a person suffering from abjection, within the gaps of secondary repression, even though the abject is an object of primal repression.[41] The abject is disorderly, improper, unclean, and refuse. The abject is directly

connected to perversion: 'The abject is perverse because it neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule, or a law: but turns them aside, misleads, corrupts; uses them, takes advantage of them, the better to deny them.'[42] The abject is a boundary, a limit, and a marginal being. Kristeva intimates that the abject is a living corpse. The abject is radically excluded and even banished, enticing one to a location where meaning collapses, but its challenge to its master does not end[43] The abject is a wandering exile that is unaware of abjections. In another work, Kristeva calls this abject exile a stranger, an uncanny, paradoxical figure, challenger of the established group, and disrupter of order. The stranger and abject also share a direct connection to difference, lack of a stable self, wandering without a fixed home, an invisible subject without existence, and belonging nowhere. Just as abjection exists within the individual, the stranger lives within us.[44]

If the abject is neither a subject nor an object, how can Kristeva claim that it even exists? She introduces jouissance joy or ecstasy, as the cause of the existence of the abject. She connects the other and jouissance with the abject in the following way: 'It is simply a frontier, a repulsive gift that the Other, having become *alter ego*, drops so that 'I' does not disappear in it but finds, in that sublime alienation, a forfeited existence. Hence a jouissance in which the subject is swallowed up but in which the Other, in return, keeps the subject from foundering by making it repugnant.'[45] Even though the abject is abhorrent, it owes its existence to the other, which is the converse of the subject turning the other into a stranger, while forgetting that it is a stranger itself. As we will see in the next chapter, Kristeva's theory of the development of the self argues that the subject and other split apart as they develop. Her conceptions of abjection and the stranger have to be placed within the context of the internal split of the subject and other. Her position seems to suggest that the subject turns the other into a stranger, whereas the other transforms the subject into an abject.

The stranger and the abject share rejection. And all three are heterogeneous. The process of rejection destroys the presence of the stranger and abject, which results in neither a subject nor an object and neither a contrasting nor a subordinate position.[46]

Rejection, a signifying process that tends towards death, decentres the subject and other. It makes it thus impossible for them to ever become present.[47] The only thing that remains is difference.

SUFFERING AND ABJECTION

Experiencing a mysterious uncanniness, feeling threatened, unable to find oneself, lacking a definite location in the world, exiled, dejected, and rejected as discarded refuse, the abject is symbolic of a new psychological type, and abjection is a postmodern form of suffering in which one feels totally worthless—a perfect human piece of shit. Having become the garbage of the psyche, no one wants to associate with such refuse, and the subject, feeling like discarded waste, sinks into self-loathing. The contents of Kristerva's description of abjection suggest some of the same hopelessness in the face of a plethora of different forms of suffering enumerated by the Buddhists. Besides comparing Kristeva with the Nikāya Buddhists on the topic of suffering, we also want to introduce some Hindu philosophers into the discussion in order to give the dialogue more balance and diversity.

Before drawing together differences, we will examine some of the major common aspects of Kristeva's concept of abjection and the Buddhist understanding of suffering. Kristeva and the Pali Buddhist texts share the same conviction that philosophical reflection is closely connected to psychological speculations. Both want a non-metaphysical explanation of human experience. Buddhist suffering shares with abjection the features of imperfection, frustration, sorrow, impermanence, emptiness, uncanniness, and insubstantiality. Suffering and abjection are also concealed, indirect, and intrinsic. Moreover, there is an indirect aspect to both, even though dukkha is apparently all-pervasive. The significant role of the unconscious is evident in both theories, although there is a much different interpretation of the way the unconscious works in each and Kristeva's claim that abjection is beyond the unconscious.

The Buddhists with respect to suffering make the connection between abjection and defilement made by Kristeva. Since existence from the Buddhist perspective is characterized by

impermanence (*anicca*), the process of becoming—birth, aging, and dying—is considered a defilement (*kilesa*).[48] The Buddhist position seems to confirm the theory of Mary Douglas that defilement is not an isolated event: 'It cannot occur except in view of a systematic ordering of ideas.'[49] If pollution ideas only make sense in reference to a total structure of thought as claimed by Douglas, the result from the position of the Buddhists is that one's mind, body, sense organs, and speech are impure. The mind possesses, for instance, a number of defilements: greed, anger, malice, envy, deceit, and arrogance.[50] Untrue and vexatious forms of speech are examples of defilement.[51] Buddhaghosa refers to sense-desires and aggregate producing kammic formations, which constitute our phantom self, as forms of defilements.[52] He lists ten states of defilements: greed, hate, delusion, conceit, false views, uncertainty, rigid mind, agitation, lacking a conscience, and shamelessness.[53] Moreover, Buddhaghosa asserts that the body is filth.[54] The popular *Dhammapada* text reiterates this point even more vigorously:

> Behold this painted image, a body full of wounds, put together, diseased, and full of many thoughts in which there is neither permanence nor stability. This body is worn out, a nest of diseases and very frail. This heap of corruption breaks to pieces, life indeed ends in death.[55]

If life is generally suffering, the body is the vehicle that transports us on the path of misery. Moreover, Buddhaghosa even thinks that defilements are a force that drives one's destiny, and it is ignorance that keeps one in defilement.[56] We are polluted most by ignorance, the greatest form of impurity from the Buddhist viewpoint.[57] Even though ignorance is the greatest single source of pollution, the Buddhist position suggests that everything that is impermanent is potentially polluting, while the path to purity is the eight-fold path.

The Buddhists and Kristeva agree that their respective modes of suffering disturb identity and order. Both parties also agree that the abject and the monk, a status symbolic of having renounced the world, are marginal beings. But the abject is the one who feels rejected, whereas it is the monk who rejects his society and the world. Due to the wide variety of suffering

identified by the Buddhists and the theoretical emphasis of Kristeva, suffering and abjection have a heterogeneous nature. Even though the Buddhist understanding of suffering shares a number of features with Kristeva's notion of abjection, the differences are especially important.

Kristeva claims that abjection is neither a subject nor an object, and this makes it difficult to locate. In contrast, there is a strong empirical emphasis in Buddhism, and it does not have much problem identifying suffering which is both objective and subjective. The Buddhists do not agree that suffering is connected to any narcissistic crisis or perversion as in abjection.[58] Kristeva states that there is no solution to abjection, whereas the Buddhists identify the most immediate cause in craving and offer a solution to suffering for the individual. While the Buddhists advocate controlling excessive craving, Kristeva, following the suggestion of Bataille, stresses the necessity for excess, which is embodied in her notion of carnival, a spectacle without a stage, a game in which the subject is reduced to nothingness.[59]

While the Buddhists' analysis of suffering in life is part of a soteriological project, Kristeva's work is without a recognizable traditional philosophical telos. The importance of excess in Kristeva's philosophy culminates in a jovial apocalyptic vision: 'A laughing apocalypse is an apocalypse without god.'[60] Kristeva and the Buddhists do agree that it is necessary to reject the logic of presence in metaphysical thinking. In place of presence Kristeva posits difference, whereas the Buddhists see the potential danger that difference could become a metaphysical principle. From the Buddhists' perspective, difference is impermanent, and it is not necessarily a worthy replacement for sameness. Although the Buddhists would not be concerned with her criticism, Wyschogrod criticizes Kristeva for her Docetism because she fails to consider the other as a person of flesh and blood.[61]

In contrast to the role of craving in the Buddhist conception of suffering and the feeling of worthlessness of the abject of Kristeva's conception, Śaṅkara argues that the cause of suffering is ignorance (avidyā). If a person plays tennis, for example, in the sun for too long, it is highly likely that he/she will get sunburn. In this example, the body suffers from the burn, while

the sun represents the cause of suffering. Śaṅkara states that such suffering is not real because the sun is not eternal, and it is a mistake to identify the body with the self.[62] The suffering of individuals is conditional upon ignorance. What about the pain experienced by the sunburnt tennis player? According to Śaṅkara, pain is superimposed by the adherent of the notion of 'I' upon its Ātman, which is forever free of pain.[63] Therefore, pain associated with suffering is also ultimately unreal. In contrast to Śaṅkara, Madhva argues that the suffering is real. Śaṅkara and Madhva agree, however, that suffering is due to ignorance, although Madhva claims that it is due to ignorance about the true nature of God, one's own self, and its dependence upon God.

Although the absolute non-dualism (*advaita*) of Śaṅkara and the dualism (*dvaita*) of Madhva are distinct from the position of Rāmānuja and his qualified non-dualism or Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy, the latter thinker agrees with the two former philosophers about the roots of suffering. According to Rāmānuja, the self is essentially unlimited and perfect knowledge; it is still, however, in a state of bondage and suffering due to ignorance and karma. The root of bondage and suffering is the mistaken belief in plurality, a stance that is distinct from the position of Madhava who accepts plurality and difference, which is based in ignorance. Ignorance hides the truth, gives rise to countless illusions, and conceals the true nature of Brahman. Ignorance can obscure reality, even though it cannot be defined as something that is or is not, because it is the material cause of an erroneous superimposition over the real. From this perspective, ignorance is the material cause of this entire false world.[64] On the other hand, karma produces the Ātman's conjunction with the body and the misconception that the Ātman is the body.[65] This type of karma can be terminated by a detachment based on *prapatti* (surrender).[66] In the path to liberation for Rāmānuja, *karmayoga* (practice of disinterested activity) leads to *jñānayoga* (a practice inferior to the former, but it develops four degrees of awareness), and it leads to *bhaktiyoga* (entailing both love and knowledge) and the only true way of attaining God.[67] The practice of *bhakti* is equivalent to prapatti, which means that the self is completely subservient to God.[68] By itself, prapatti will not lead to release, although Rāmānuja intimates, however, that it provokes God's grace, the source of all final release.[69]

Not unlike the tendency among the Indian thinkers, Levinas discusses the nature of suffering in terms of solitude, which distinguishes his position from that of Kristeva and the role of the other in her theory. With respect to physical pain, Levinas thinks that it is impossible to detach oneself for even a brief moment from existence: 'The content of suffering merges with the impossibility of detaching oneself from suffering.'[70] There is thus no refuge in suffering because one is exposed constantly to being. There is not only any refuge to be gained from suffering, it is also not possible to flee or retreat from suffering: 'In this sense suffering is the impossibility of nothingness.'[71] Within suffering, the individual is called to death, an impossible nothingness. Death announces itself in suffering: '...death announces an event over which the subject is not master, an event in relation to which the subject is no longer a subject.'[72] Levinas helps us to recognize that any discussion of suffering must include a look at the nature of death.

THE ABYSS OF DEATH

While teaching King Janaka of Videha, the great sage Yājñavalkya takes the opportunity to discuss the nature of death in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4.4.1–2). The wise sage informs the king that the advent of death is normally evident by a weakening of the powers of the body, mind, and senses, which slowly develops into a failure to operate properly. The energy of the dying person descends into the heart: 'This point of his heart becomes lighted up. By that light the self departs, either by the eye, or by the head, or by other bodily parts. After him, as he goes out, the life (*prāṇa*) goes out' (4.4.2). The other breaths and intelligence follow the lead of the previous occupants of the body, leaving behind a mass of lifeless matter. This ancient text proceeds to relate that the self enters into a new form of life depending on its previous deeds (karma). According to the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (8.12.1) and the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (2.18), both historically later texts in comparison to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, death is illusory in relation to the eternal self (Ātman). These major ideas shaped the Hindu philosophy of death for

centuries. The Nikāya Buddhists devoted, however, greater attention to death, generally speaking, than Indian philosophers. Due to the attention given to death by the Buddhists, we will engage them in a dialogue with some postmodern thinkers on a subject of profound significance for both parties.

The Buddhists not only equate death with suffering, but they use death as a grand archetype of it. Death is the great ender of everything, and this ender is personified by the mythological figure of Māra, a unified notion that takes its shape from the pattern of Buddhist doctrine.[73] Māra is derived from the root *mṛ*, meaning to die, and it is etymologically related to *maccu*, which indicates death itself. Thus Māra, as the personification of death, is the being who slays or causes to die.[74] Coming from the same root as Māra, the terms *māretā* and *miyati* bring out some of the philosophical nuances of death for the Buddhists. Miyati refers to all conditions that are impermanent and subject to death. And māretā indicates all defilements, fetters, and interruptions that cause death. In short, it is that which kills or destroys.[75] These terms help us to grasp the impermanence of life, the universality of death, the certainty of death for all living things, and its defiling nature. Although death is inevitable and destroys all human happiness, success, fortune, worldly status and hope, it is still concomitant with life.[76] The *Sanyutta-Nikāya* expresses it lucidly and succinctly: 'All creatures have to die. Life is but death.'[77] The postmodern literary figure, Edmond Jabès makes this Buddhist observation a bit more ironical: 'All is dead, and you think you are living.'[78]

From the Buddhist perspective, death (*maraṇa*) can only be grasped within the context of causation (paṭiccasamuppāda). In a similar way, Jabès thinks that context is important, although for him the basic context is viewed as life and not causation. He writes, 'It is in the middle of life that you learn to die, as if till then death were but a deferred encounter.'[79] This philosophically fundamental assumption by Buddhism indicates that everything is subject to impermanence, decay, and death, since everything is conditioned and dependent within the cycle of causation. Within this causal context, death represents the dissolution of the five aggregates that gives the false impression of a permanent self.[80] Even if we understand how causation operates, death is still very unpredictable.[81] This type of conviction

leads the philosopher Buddhaghosa to distinguish two kinds of death: timely and untimely. The first kind of death occurs normally with the exhaustion of merit or a life span or with both, whereas an untimely death occurs when kamma interrupts life-producing kamma.[82]

Due to the Buddhist acceptance of the concept of rebirth inherited from Indian culture, death is repetitive because no single death is unique within the context of causation in which one will be reborn and die countless times until one escapes from the cycle. Derrida agrees with the Buddhists that death is repetitive, although for a different reason. From one perspective, human beings cannot repeat, reproduce, or represent anything with any finality. And yet they continually repeat, reproduce, and represent. Death is repetition, meaning repeatability or the repetitions of repetition, in the sense that its potentiality depends on the possibility of an absence of the repeated, and represents the possibility of self-duplication.[83] What Derrida is trying to indirectly demonstrate is that death is an abyss, a term that suggests that death is radically unknowable and intrinsically unnamable. This also means that death cannot be formalized. By referring to death as an abyss, there is a possibility for repetition, a process that kills both the repeater and the repeated. This is a paradoxical way to assert that death is both non-representable and a condition for all representation.

Although death possesses an overwhelming power over all living things, the Buddhists still think that by directly confronting death one can gain liberation from it, unlike some postmodernists who seem to think that death is revelatory and liberating. It is possible to begin by recollecting death for the Buddhists. Buddhaghosa enumerates eight ways: having the appearance of a murderer; as the ruin of success; by comparison; as to sharing the body with many; as to the frailty of life; as signless; as to the limitedness of the extent; as to the shortness of the moment. The fourth form of recollection—sharing the body with many—is especially interesting. When Buddhaghosa states that this body is shared by many he means that one must recollect the eight families of worms, the creatures that live and feed on the outer skin, those that feed on flesh, and creatures that feed on bones. What is especially

disgusting to recollect is the following: 'And there they are born, grow old and die, evacuate, and make water; and the body is their maternity home, their hospital, their charnel ground, their privy and their urinal.'[84] From recollection of death, one can proceed to mediation on it.

The recollection of death is a method of detaching oneself from the world and human existence. Buddhaghosa's comments also suggest that death possesses a revelatory power about the true nature of life. Jabès agrees with Buddhaghosa about the revelatory ability of death. Jabès writes, 'Space is first of all within us. Death is a revelation of space.'[85] In another textual context, he observes, 'Death lets us see the world as it was or will be.'[86] The Buddhists agree that by contemplating death our future condition will be revealed to us, although the Buddhists take this awareness further than Jabès by stressing the need for detachment.

Agreeing with the spirit of the Buddhists' way of recollecting death, Derrida thinks that Buddhaghosa's basic presupposition is correct because humans do not reflect on death. Derrida states that human beings never aim at death, even though it is the end of life. They also never directly face death, an event in ordinary time, but approach it circuitously through the detour of historical time and space. Human beings certainly anticipate death. And it is at this point that Derrida connects death with imagination because it belongs to the same chain of significations as the anticipation of death. 'Imagination is at bottom the relationship with death. The image is death.'[87] Due to this relationship, imagination shares with death its characteristics of being representative and supplementary.

Rather than the connection between imagination and death discerned by Derrida, the Buddhists use meditation on death, which takes two basic forms. There is mindfulness of death (*maranasati*) in which one is instructed to focus one's mind on the thought that 'Death will take place,' or one should meditate on the idea of death itself.[88] The other fundamental method of meditating on death is called the meditation on foulness (*asubha bhāvanā*). A practitioner can meditate, for instance, on a corpse. This method will help to rid one of the illusions of 'I' or 'mine.' By meditating on a rotting corpse, this also destroys the illusion of the permanence of the body.[89] This type of method

establishes mindfulness (*sati*), removes hindrances (*nivaraṇa*) that obscure the mind, and allows for *jhāna* (higher states of contemplation or absorption) to appear. Another result is *saṃvega*, a transforming experience leading one beyond absorption to insight (*vipassanā*) and wisdom (*pañña*).[90] Referring to the monk diligently practising, Buddhaghosa states, 'He acquires perception of disenchantment with all kinds of becoming (existence). He conquers attachment to life.'[91]

Again, we find Derrida in harmony with the Buddhist position in relation to its emphasis on the lack of presence of the self. For Derrida, the experience of my death, as an 'I am present,' does not affect or modify me in any way. Writing in a spirit sympathetic to the Buddhist position on the nature of the self, Derrida argues:

> The *I am*, being lived only as an *I am present*, itself presupposes in itself the relationship to presence in general, to being as presence. The appearing of the *I* to itself in the *I am* is thus originally a relation to its own possible disappearance. Therefore, *I am* originally means *I am mortal*. *I am immortal* is an impossible proposition.[92]

Although the lack of a permanent self is akin to the Buddhist position, Derrida is less in harmony with the Buddhists when he discusses death as a unifying factor. As a person encounters his/her own death, according to Derrida, such a person therein constitutes his/her own subjectivity.[93] This suggests that death is not an isolating factor in life, but is rather a unifying factor. Finally, Derrida also connects death, a radical absence of both subject and object, with différance: 'Death is the movement of differance to the extent that that movement is necessarily finite. This means that difference makes the opposition of presence and absence possible.'[94] From the Buddhists perspective, death is better grasped as a movement of causation and not as either a movement of difference or sameness.

Although there are some differences to be found between them, the Buddhists would find the tendency among some postmodern thinkers to deify death very strange. Jabès claims that 'Because God is immortal, death is immortal likewise.'[95] Derrida equates God with death,[96] and Blanchot does the same thing: 'From the death of God it follows that death is of God.'[97] And to state as Jabès does that 'Death is the source of eternity,'

or to say that 'Death is holy as the forbidden name of God is holy,'[98] is to make immortal an existential phenomenon. If the name of god is equivalent to the name of death for Derrida, they both represent limits that cannot be transformed into objects for analysis. These final limits draw a line around one's own life and that of the other and circumscribes it.[99] For Nikāya Buddhism, immortality (*amata*) is a term that is a synonym of no-rebirth (*a-punabhava*).[100] A person who overcomes the process of becoming also overcomes time, because there is no time apart from the process of becoming. Based on the writings of the postmodernists already cited, the Buddhists could only be perplexed about the motivation for the postmodernists' transformation of death into an apparent metaphysical principle.

SUFFERING AND EROTICISM

When Nikāya Buddhists or classical Hindu philosophers consider suffering they usually have in mind all or a combination of the following notions: karma, rebirth, time māyā (unreal, illusory), death, and the human condition—both internally within the person and externally within the world. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, a contemporary Neo-Vedānta philosopher, interprets many of these concepts differently than classical Hindu thinkers in response to western critics of the Hindu understanding of suffering. In order to give this chapter more balance between Buddhist and Hindu philosophy and more balance between classical Hindu philosophers and contemporary philosophers, we will focus on Radhakrishnan's interpretation of the problem of suffering, and we will briefly compare his thought to that of the postmodern work of Bataille and Blanchot.

According to Radhakrishanan, as a human being lives in the world, he/she faces an uncertain future that arouses his/her hopes and fears. By becoming aware of the prospect of one's death as an inevitable future event, one feels at odds with the processes of the cosmos, and fear of death distorts one's vision and inhibits one's natural impulses, After the loss of one's feeling of unity with the cosmos, one also losses one's innocence or sense of empathy with others within the world, and one begins to place personal preferences above the welfare of the whole: 'He looks upon himself as something lonely, final and absolute, and every other man as his potential enemy.'[101] The world in which we exist is neither some form of ultimate reality nor is it an apparition. Moreover, the world cannot be reduced to our personal state of consciousness because it possesses a partial reality dependent on being. Although the world is real for Radhakrishnan, it is forever changing, and it does not lack a unity and meaning, which is revealed by the reality that is present throughout the world. Thus the world is not a purposeless chaos. But how can we know this? Radhakrishnan answers: 'We are able to know that the world is imperfect, finite, and changing, because we have a consciousness of the eternal and the perfect.'[102] The apparently unstable and fleeting nature of worldly events gives one nothing to grasp because change and impermanence are essential features of existence within the world. However, the world is guided by a spiritual force that aims at the actualization and manifestation of this force, which is a position that is far removed from the playful spirit of postmodern philosophy and its rejection of any kind of attribution of a telos to the world.

If the constant flow of change and impermanence represents our external relation to the world for Radhakrishnan, change and division internally characterize a person. Radhakrishnan thinks that a person is confused; 'Our values are blurred, our thought is confused, our aims are waving, and our future is uncertain.'[103] Human beings are paradoxical in the sense that they desire those things that are apparently incompatible with their welfare. A person's mode of existence is discordant because he/she lives with an awareness of one's nothingness, forlornness, insufficiency, dependence, weakness, and emptiness.[104] A person is also afflicted with anxiety, which is produced by freedom. Agreeing with Kierkegaard's conception of anxiety, Radhakrishnan states that anxiety is a fear that we may abuse our freedom or that we might commit a sin.[105] Radhakrishnan wants to suggest that a person suffers both with respect to his/her relation to the world and others, and we suffer internally due to our fears and anxieties.

If everything that exists suffers constant change, does this mean that rebirth represents a meaningless, eternal recurrence? Although some critics of Hindu thought have made such

a change, Radhakrishnan answers such a question with his interpretation of the tradition by stating that rebirth does not represent an eternal recurrence or a movement devoid of meaning, but it is rather best to comprehend it as a growth of personality and character.[106] This genuine personal growth is shaped by our free choice and follows us after death. This more positive attitude toward the concept of rebirth is also reflected in Radhakrishnan's interpretation of the notion of karma.

Against critics of Hindu thought, Radhakrishnan asserts that it is incorrect to emphasize that karma represents a principle of retribution because it is better understood as a principle of continuity.[107] What he means is that the concept of karma, which places significant stress on right action, reflects an opportunity for a person to continuously shape his/her own self and future. According to Radhakrishnan, karma, which possesses a connection with past actions, is not incongruous with personal freedom, and it is not to be confused with a rigid juridical theory of rewards and punishments or with necessity. Moreover, the concept of karma must not be confused with a hedonistic lifestyle.[108] The principle of karma is best grasped as both retrospective and prospective in the sense that it acknowledges a continuity with the past and also recognizes the creative freedom of the self. In an internally apologetic book designed to respond to critics of Hinduism, Radhakrishnan tends to interpret karma theistically by insisting that it represents the primacy of the ethical, and he identifies God with the rule of law: 'It is the embodiment of the mind and will of God.'[109] Rather than being a mechanical principle, the law of karma works in such a way that 'The day of judgement is not in some remote future, but here and now, and none can escape it.'[110]

The deceased person, for Radhakrishnan, abandons the world of the others and leaves it behind him/her. The remaining others can still experience the departed as with them, but the deceased is not encountered as a corporeal thing; it is a Being-just-present-at-hand.[111] For the survivors, death is a loss, although they can never gain access to the loss-of-Being. The others can never actually experience the death of a Being. It is possible to experience the dying of the individuals in the sense of being there alongside of them.[112]

Since impermanence is universal for Radhakrishnan, the flux of life leads inevitably to death. An encounter with the nothingness represented by death results in suffering 'from a feeling of profound unrest and care, a "radical insecurity of being".'[113] When one comes to know death and its accompanying isolation, these create an internal division within a person. By falling into fragmentariness, one becomes a divided being, who is 'tormented by doubt, fear, and suffering.'[114] Devoid of freedom, one seeks frantically for external support in order to escape one's fear, isolation, suspicion, and the violence that surrounds one. But this situation is not hopeless, according to Radhakrishnan, because: 'Man's awareness of his finiteness and temporality means his consciousness of eternity.'[115] Thus it is possible for one to overcome one's ignorance and suffering. For Radhakrishnan, salvation, an intuitive realization that one is the ultimate Brahman and thus free, does not involve an escape from life or the world because Brahman is the essence of the cosmos.[116] In fact, liberation (mokṣa) is the personal realization of one's purpose in life, the attainment of perfection, and the terminal point of historical existence.[117]

Throughout his treatment of such major concepts like karma, rebirth, and death, there is a moderate tonality to Radhakrishnan's philosophy. With respect to his remarks about karma, Radhakrishnan allows room, for instance, for 'genuine rational freedom.'[118] Moreover Radhakrishnan does not stress the pervasiveness of suffering in order not to give the impression that Hindu thought is pessimistic. In contrast to this moderate and rational approach of Radhakrishnan, the postmodern work of Bataille and Blanchot tends to emphasize the excessive features of life, which can be seen most vividly in their discussion about death.

The phenomenon of death can only be grasped in Bataille's thought within the context of eroticism, which he defines as an extreme emotion that searches for sensual pleasure, and it represents an excessive, boundless energy.[119] Eroticism is an insane world of play in which one simply does no work, but simply responds to one's passions within a solitary context, making eroticism a secret, anti-social activity. By striking at the centre of one's being, eroticism gives one a revelation of continuity in contrast to the discontinuity in which one normally lives. It is eroticism, an infraction of the restrictions imposed

by taboos that paves the way for death.[120] In fact, the final sense of eroticism is death.[121] This is dramatically illustrated in Bataille's novel, *Story of the Eye,* where the female libertine rapes a priest. By means of the physical and sexual violence of the female protagonist, the priest experiences simultaneous death by strangulation and sexual orgasm, a union of death and eroticism. In contrast to the excess and decadence of Bataille, Radhakrishnan advocates a path between extremes and a way totally opposed to the pure play of eroticism, which he finds to be counter-productive and meaningless.

In contrast to Radhakrishnan and Bataille, Blanchot writes ambivalently about death because it is a revelatory power, and yet it is limited in its power. Death is necessary for liberation and knowledge: 'Death alone allows me to grasp what I want to attain; it exists in words as the only way they can have meaning. Without death, everything would sink into absurdity and nothingness.'[122] Death is limited in the sense that it sets a final day for a person, and yet it also defers until an undersignated time. This observation leads Blanchot to think that there is something mightier than death, which he identifies with dying, an un-power that flees and pulls indefinitely. Caputo clarifies Blanchot's position by writing, 'With the word "dying", Blanchot means to point a silent finger at the weakness, the fragility of the self, the inertia...being cut off from the busy flow of the world, the disaster, the impotent, impoverished weakness from which any work of art, would issue.'[123] Dying is excessive because: 'It wrests from the present, it is always a step over the edge, it rules out every conclusion and all ends, it does not free nor does it shelter.'[124] Dying suggests that one is already dead in a past that one cannot remember. Dying is not a matter of growing old or becoming ill; it is more like a slow ontological erosion of the self.

Without location and time, dying is not an event that becomes, lasts, or ends; it lacks a now moment.[125] Dying continually comes but it never fully arrives. Dying reaches no point of fulfillment. It is without an end point or conclusion. There is a banal aspect to dying: "Dying"...is pure insignificance, an event without concrete reality, one which has lost all value as a personal and interior drama, because there is no longer any interior: 'It is the moment when *I die* signifies to me as I die a banality which there is no way to take into consideration: in the liberated world and in these moments when freedom is an absolute apparition, dying is unimportant and death has no depth.'[126] Dying cannot finish or accomplish itself because death prevents paradoxically a person from truly dying. This scenario is akin to a postmodern nightmare from Radhakrishnan's perspective.

Based on what Radhakrishnan writes about change and temporality, he responds to Blanchot's view that life is not a mere chain of physical causes and effects that is governed by pure chance. For Radhakrishnan, there is nothing that is merely accidental.[127] If the meaning of time for Radhakrishnan transcends time and possesses meaning because it comes to an end, death is not without meaning for a person.[128] Moreover, death is not excessive in the sense expressed by either Blanchot or Bataille for Radhakrishnan because birth and life entail constant death as part of the process of change. Since everything that exists suffers change, death is merely a part of this process of becoming and continual dissolution. There is agreement, however, among the three thinkers that death or dying does not necessarily involve a focus upon my personal dying, but it rather opens me to a concern for the other and places me in relationship to the dying other.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter, we witnessed considerable commonality between the Nikāya Buddhists' conception of suffering and Kristeva's notion of abjection, a postmodern form of suffering in which a person feels completely worthless. The Buddhists and Kristeva share basic psychological insights into the human condition, a non-metaphysical emphasis on human experience, a rejection of the logic of presence in metaphysics, agree about the heterogeneous nature of suffering and abjection, and they agree about the marginal nature of the abject and the monk. The Buddhists understanding of suffering shares several fundamental features with abjection that include some of the following: imperfection; frustration; sorrow; impermanence; emptiness; uncanniness; insubstantiality; and concealment. Suffering and abjection are both indirect, intrinsic, disturb identity and order, and both are connected to defilement. There are, however, a number of differences between suffering and abjection. Since

abjection can be discerned in neither a subject nor an object, it is difficult to locate, whereas the Buddhists have little problem locating objective and subjective forms of suffering. The Buddhists do not specifically identify their notion of suffering with some kind of narcissistic crisis or perversion. The Buddhists and Kristeva disagree, respectively, about the potential for a solution to suffering and abjection. Thus the Buddhists disagree with Kristeva over the impossibility of a telos and the postmodernist's emphasis on excessiveness.

On the one hand, we have noted that Śaṅkara and Madhva connect suffering directly to ignorance, although they differ about what one is exactly ignorant. On the other hand, Rāmānuja associates suffering with ignorance and karma. In contrast, to these Hindu philosophers, Levinas links suffering with solitude, a situation devoid of the other. With respect to the topic of death, the Buddhists view it as a paradigm of suffering, whereas Derrida views it as an abyss. The Buddhists and Derrida agree that death is repetitive, although the latter grasps death as the repetitions of repetition. In contrast to the Buddhists' position, Derrida views death as a unifying factor that he connects with the movement of differance, while the Buddhists connect death with the movement of causation. The Buddhists and Jabès agree that death possesses a revelatory power.

Besides a connection to death, Radhakrishnan defines suffering in terms of uncertainty, fear anxiety, change, impermanence, discord, and insecurity. We have witnessed that Radhakrishnan does not share the embrace of death and excess with Blanchot and Bataille. Radhakrishnan also does not directly connect death to eroticism as does Bataille, and he does not think that an awareness of death is necessary for knowledge and liberation as claimed by Blanchot. Radhakrishnan thinks that we need to gain freedom from fear, replace anxiety with faith, and conquer our internal discord with spiritual harmony. These goals can be achieved by means of religion, or what he sometimes calls a rational faith.[129] Although we will have more to say about reason in a later chapter, Radhakrishnan thinks, for instance, that even the principle of karma does not exclude the role of reason in human life.[130] In contrast, the abject person of Kristeva's creative insights is far removed from the noble, rational person of Enlightenment philosophy.

ENDNOTES

1. Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon Books, 1954), p. 98.
2. Bruce R. Reichenbach, *The Law of Karma: A Philosophical Study* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), pp. 12, 42.
3. Karl H. Potter, 'The Karma Theory and Its Interpretation in Some Indian Philosophical Systems', in *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions*, ed. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1980), p. 243.
4. See Christopher Chapple, *Karma and Creativity* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1986).
5. Eliade, *Yoga*, p. 12.
6. George Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, trans. Allan Stoekl, *Theory and History of Literature*, Volume 14 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. 97.
7. Steven Collins, *Selfless Persons: Imagery and Thought in Theravâda Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 191.
8. Ibid., p. 193.
9. Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, Second Edition (Bedford: Gordon Fraser, 1967), p. 17.
10. Buddhaghosa, XVI.34. Ninian Smart makes clear that suffering for Buddhism is not strictly with external material forces, but that it also includes a person's consciousness in *Reflections in the Mirror of Religion*, ed. John P. Burris (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1997), p. 124.
11. Ibid., XVI.35.
12. *Book of the Kindred Sayings*, 2.82.
13. Buddhaghosa, 17.158–73.
14. Ibid., 5.60. Ninian Smart clarifies ignorance in the Buddhist context when he writes, 'The prefix suggests otherness rather than just absence of knowledge or insight. It means *moha*—a kind of confusion; but even more than that it involves having a wrong view of the world' (p. 121) in *Reflections*.
15. Buddhaghosa, 4.256; *Middle Length Sayings*, 1.55.
16. *Middle Length Sayings*, 1.435.
17. David J. Kalupahana, *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology* (Albany, N. Y.: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 15.
18. Ibid., p. 18.
19. *Buddha's Teachings*, trans. R. Chalmers, Harvard Oriental Series, Vol. 37 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932), p. 139.
20. *Dialogues of the Buddha*, 2.308.
21. The term *upādāna* literally means that material substance by means of which an active process is kept going or alive according to

T. W. Rhys Dacids and William Stede eds., *The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary* (London: Luzac and Company, Ltd., 1966), p. 149; it can also mean full or that which a fire grasps to maintain its existence, see Edward J. Thomas, *The History of Buddhist Thought* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1971), p. 62.

22. Arthur Oncken Lovejoy, 'The Buddhist Technical Terms Upādāna and Upādisesa', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 19 (1898), p. 129.

23. *The Dhammapada*, trans. S. Radhakrishnan (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 347.

24. *Book of the Kindred Sayings*, 4.257.

25. *Middle Length Sayings*, 1.498.

26. Ibid., 1.319.

27. *Dhammapada*, p. 284.

28. Ibid., p. 336.

29. *Book of the Kindred Sayings*, 4.47, 4.107.

30. Kalupahana, *History*, p. 86.

31. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 1.

32. Ibid., p. 2.

33. Ibid., p. 71.

34. Ibid., p. 3.

35. Ibid., p. 51.

36. Ibid., p. 4.

37. Ibid., p. 5. In the early work of Martin Heidegger, he uses the term *Unheimlichkeit* (uncanniness, uneasiness) to partly explain why one flees in the face of death. The term also includes the idea of homelessness, as does Kristeva's concept of abjection.

38. Ibid., p. 9.

39. Ibid., p. 14.

40. Ibid., p. 15.

41. Ibid., p. 12.

42. Ibid., p. 15.

43. Ibid., p. 2.

44. For a fuller discussion of the stranger, see Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

45. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p. 9. This statement by Kristeva appears to prove the misinterpretation of her position by Edith Wyschogrod: 'The *jouissance* of abjection is without alterity, the ecstasy that comes from a repeated iteration of self-loathing...', *Saints*, p. 247.

46. Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 182.

47. Ibid., pp. 171, 203.

48. *Middle Length Sayings*, 1.250.

49. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), p. 41.

50. *Middle Length Sayings*, 1.36.

51. Ibid., 3.236.

52. Buddhaghosa, 4.84, 8.236.

53. Ibid., 22.49.

54. Ibid., 7.44.

55. *Dhammapada*, pp. 147–8.

56. Buddhaghosa, 18.136, 281.

57. *Dhammapada*, p. 243.

58. I have addressed the issue of narcissism at length in another work. See chapter 7 of *The Indian Renouncer and Postmodern Poison: A Cross-Cultural Encounter* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1997).

59. Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 78.

60. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p. 206.

61. Wyschogrod, p. 251.

62. Śaṅkara, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 2.2.10.

63. Śaṅkara, *Upadeśasāhasrī*, 1.18.20.

64. Rāmānuja, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 1.1.1.

65. Rāmānuja, *Bhagavadgītā*, 5.15.

66. Ibid., 15.6.

67. Ibid., 2.72. According to Rāmānuja, the path of *jñānayoga* includes four degrees of *jñānanistha* (knowledge awareness): (1) the overcoming of all desires by focusing the mind only on the Ātman; (2) to have no desire for pleasing objects and to be free from wishful thoughts, fear, and anger; (3) indifference to pleasing objects, joy, and hatred; (4) withdrawal of the senses from objects and concentration on the Ātman (*Bhagavadgītā*, 2.55–8). In order to achieve jñananistha, one must strive to subdue the senses, which disturb the mind. When the mind of the self is calm, the suffering resulting from the connection between the *puruṣa* (self) and *prakṛti* (matter) will cease. Then the *buddhi* (intellect) will be fixed on God. By concentrating on God and withdrawing the senses from objects, one's vision will be directed to the Ātman (*Bhagavadgītā*, 2.65–8). There are four degrees of awareness in contemplating upon the Ātman. The devotee will become aware that his/her Ātman is in all beings. The person will recognize that God is present in all Ātmans and they in Him. A person becomes cognizant of his/her equality to God. Lastly, the person perceives no difference between his/her own Ātman and that of others. (*Bhagavadgītā*, 8.29–32).

68. Rāmānuja, *Vedārthasaṃgraha*, 3.141. The importance of *prapatti* for Rāmānuja's thought is stressed by van Buitenen in 'Introduction'

to *Rāmānuja on the Bhagavadgītā*, p. 25 and Robert C. Lester, 'Rāmānuja and Śri-Vaiṣṇavism: the Concept of Prapatti or Śaranāgati', *History of Religions*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1966), pp. 266–82. Lester demonstrates Rāmānuja's use of the concept of prapatti, but he claims that the Indian thinker does not support either the Teṅgalai or Vaḍagalai views. The interpretations of van Buitenen and Lester are disputed by Lipner who writes, 'Indeed, I do not think there can be the slightest doubt that for Rāmānuja the only path to salvation was a God-centered integration of knowledge and works in the life of the devotee—there was no alternative to that' (p. 116).

69. Van Buitenen, 'Introduction', p. 26.
70. Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), p. 69.
71. Ibid., p. 69.
72. Ibid., p. 70.
73. T. O. Ling, *Buddhism and the Mythology of Evil: A Study of Theravada Buddhism* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1962), p. 57.
74. Ibid., p. 56.
75. James W. Boyd, 'Symbols of Evil in Buddhism', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXI, No. 1 (1971), p. 68.
76. Buddhaghosa, 8.13–15.
77. *Book of the Kindred Sayings*, p. 196.
78. Edmond Jabès, *The Book of Questions*, Vol. II (Four volumes in one), trans. Rosmarie Waldrop (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1991), p. 129.
79. Ibid., p. 166.
80. Buddhaghosa, 7.16.
81. Ibid., 8.29.
82. Ibid., 8.2.
83. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 292.
84. Buddhaghosa, 8.25.
85. Jabès, *Questions*, Vol. II, p. 241.
86. Ibid., p. 308.
87. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 184.
88. Buddhaghosa, 8.4. For an excellent discussion of this topic see George D. Bond, 'Theravada Buddhism's Meditations on Death and the Symbolism of Initiatory Death', *History of Religions*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (1980), pp. 237–58.
89. Buddhaghosa, 6.78–89.
90. Ibid., 8.37–41.
91. Ibid., 8.41.
92. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 54.
93. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 69.
94 Ibid., p. 193.

95. Jabès, *Questions*, Vol. II, p. 226.
96. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 246.
97. Blanchot, *Writing of the Disaster*, p. 91.
98. Jabès, *Questions*, Vol. II, pp. 312, 293.
99. Jacques Derrida, 'Circumfession: Fifty-nine Periods and Periphrases,' in *Jacques Derrida*, by Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 206.
100. *Book of the Kindred Sayings*, 1.174.
101. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 43.
102. Ibid., p. 89.
103. Radhakrishnan, 'The Religion of the Spirit and the World's Need: Fragments of a Confession', in *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, The Library of Living Philosophers, Vol. VII (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1952; reprinted 1991), p. 25: hereafter cited as 'Fragments'.
104. Ibid., p. 52.
105. Ibid., pp. 51–2.
106. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 301.
107. Ibid., p. 275.
108. Ibid., pp. 275–6.
109. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1926), p. 53.
110. Ibid., p. 53.
111. Ibid., p. 281.
112. Ibid., p. 282.
113. Radhakrishnan, 'Fragments', p. 51.
114. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 44.
115. Radhakrishnan, 'Fragments', p. 57.
116. Radhakrishnan, *Idealist View of Life*, pp. 124, 128.
117. Radhakrishnan, *Hindu View of Life*, p. 46.
118. Ibid., p. 54.
119. Bataille, *Tears*, p. 44; *Accursed Share*, p. 167.
120. Bataille, *Death and Sensuality*, p. 24.
121. Ibid., p. 141.
122. Blanchot, *Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 43.
123. Caputo, *Prayers and Tears*, p. 85.
124. Blanchot, *Writing of Disaster*, p. 48.
125. Blanchot, *Step Not Beyond*, p. 108.
126. Blanchot, *Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 40.
127. Radhakrishnan, 'Fragments', p. 6.
128. Radhakrishnan, *Idealist View of Life*, p. 46.
129. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 19.
130. Radhakrishnan, *Hindu View of Life*, p. 54.



The Disappearing Self

Assuming a prophetic mode in his work *Les Mots et les Choses*, Michel Foucault discusses the death of man by writing about the last man, who is paradoxically anterior and posterior to the death of God: 'Since he has killed God, it is he himself who must answer for his own finitude; but since it is in the death of God that he speaks, thinks, and exists, his murder itself is doomed to die; new gods, the same gods, are already swelling the future Ocean; man will disappear.'[1] From the creative perspective of the writings of Edmond Jabès, if God and man are dead, the world can only exist through the book: 'Man does not exist. God does not exist. The world alone exists through God and man in the open book.'[2] This seems to suggest that the book gives whatever life there is. In another context Jabès writes about man 'Death makes him God's equal.'[3] This possible because death is an event where God meets God. Since the self or ego is not present before itself or in itself, Levinas refers to its ipseity or its identity for oneself, which is given with an experience of an affective order.[4] In a bit more radical view of the self, Lacan stresses the excentric and decentred nature of the self.[5] Following in the tracks of Levinas and Lacan, Derrida focuses on the lack of presence of the self. If we say, 'Here I am,' the self is no longer present for Derrida because the 'I' gets effaced as a present event and cannot be present to itself.[6] All of these

positions are suggestive about the postmodern view of the nature of the self. But the title of this chapter is taken from the work of Mark C. Taylor in which the disappearance of the self coincides with the emergence of the trace.[7] In fact, the self is replaced by what Taylor calls markings, which for him means traces.

This brief survey of postmodern opinions about the self make it clear that they provide a sharp contrast with various forms of Indian philosophy, and they suggest possibilities for a fruitful dialogue between selected postmodernists and Indian philosophers. In this chapter, we will begin by comparing the positions of Śaṅkara with Taylor. We will then place Rāmānuja into dialogue with Lacan, and Nikāya Buddhism into dialogue with Levinas. Since Madhva stresses difference in his thought, we will compare his concept of the self with Derrida and Kristeva. Abhinavagupta will be a part of this discussion as an Indian representative of the monistic position. And finally we will engage Radhakrishnan, a representative of contemporary Indian philosophy, with Charles Taylor, a philosopher writing during the postmodern period who is critical of many of its aspects. The choice of Taylor is intended to give the discussion of this chapter some balance in comparison to some of the typical postmodern thinkers.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE SELF?

Following in the methodological footsteps of Derrida, Mark C. Taylor begins by deconstructing the western view of the self. In the typical western view, the self is self-related and self-conscious, and created in the image of God, reflection divine subjectivity. Because the self is created in the image of god and achieves its true realization in the imitation of Christ (*imitato christi*), it is an image of an image: 'By becoming a copy of a copy, the self paradoxically becomes *itself*.'[8] Being a self presupposes having a name, which gives one an identity and makes one unique: 'To be a self is to possess and to be possessed by a name.'[9] By receiving a proper name, a means of establishing a difference between oneself and others, one becomes a peculiar individual with the private ownership of something unique to oneself that renders one real and authentic. To possess a proper name necessarily involves self-presence, which is more fully

realized in self-consciousness when the self becomes aware of itself. This self-presence is only possible in the present moment, a single tense of time embodying three related modalities of time.[10]

The presence of the self is compromised by the complexity of the present moment in which the self becomes present to itself because 'The self-conscious subject is not immediately present to itself but must become self-present through the process of self-presentation.'[11] The suggests that there is a synthetic identity of the self because it is not one but rather a trinity of inseparable modalities. This situation causes problems for the self when it attempts to write its autobiography. It is at this point that Taylor begins to deconstruct the dominant western conception of the self.

When one tries to write autobiographically, one becomes dispossessed and divorced from oneself because writing breaks one's connection to oneself. By attempting to write about the self, one discovers that the self has been stolen from one's possession because writing is basically a thief, although it does allow one to see that everything is plural and complex by means of its ability to disclose things. Śaṅkara agrees with Taylor that writing does not get one any closer to the self, although the Indian philosopher reaches his conclusion for totally different reasons. For Śaṅkara, writing is an action that is necessarily impermanent. When one tries to name the self for Taylor, however, in the process of writing one represents it. If the self cannot secure its proper name, it cannot establish its true identity or become present to itself.[12] In contrast, a proper name for Śaṅkara represents certain class characteristics, but it does not manifest one's true selfhood.

It is not uncommon to define the authentic identity of the self in terms of the same. According to Taylor, this identity is misleading due to its synchronic and diachronic elements, respectively, an identity at a given moment and an identity over the course of time, because the self is simultaneously trying to become itself and other, a joining of identity and difference. Since there is always a difference within the identity of the self and absence within the presence of the self, the self, finds its presence disrupted and its present moment dislocated. This disruption and dislocation caused by the interplay of identity

and difference—and of presence and absence—means that the present is merely a trace and that time is forever errant, a ceaseless transition of moments.[13] By becoming aware of this situation, the self discovers that its name means nothing in terms of a secure identity and established presence. In short, one discovers the absence of a permanent self, an absence that is always present, a mere trace. This shattered self is marked by death itself, an uncanniness that continually intrudes upon presence. The final result is that 'Within the space of the trace is inscribed a cross that marks the site of the disappearance of the self.'[14] Assuming the intimate interconnection of God, self, and history in western thought, Taylor concludes that the disappearance of the self along with the death of God must necessarily result in the end of history.

In response to Taylor's position, Śaṅkara responds emphatically that the self in not a combination of identity and difference, is not subject to time, is not marked by death, and it does possess presence. From Śaṅkara's perspective, it is only possible to discover the absence of a permanent self by means of ignorance. Moreover, it is nonsensical to discuss the disappearance of the self, a self-luminous and timeless reality.[15] According to Śaṅkara, Taylor is writing about the self from the perspective of lower knowledge (*aparā vidyā),* whereas the Indian philosopher is more concerned with the self from the standpoint of higher knowledge (parā vidyā). From this higher perspective, the Ātman (self) is a worldly phenomenon, and, therefore, time is not a philosophical category that applies to it, which necessarily entails that Ātman is not subject to birth or death. It is rather eternal, unchanging, and without any origin.[16] Besides its timeless quality, the Ātman is also spaceless because spatial relations pertain only to the empirical realm. Moreover, when Taylor tries to think about the self he cannot succeed because the Ātman is unthinkable due to the fact that thinking is a process within time that tends to objectify that with which it comes into contact. From Śaṅkara's perspective, it is possible to know and verify in an ontological sense that the self exists, but it is an altogether different matter to know what it is precisely due to the limits of human knowledge. Nonetheless, the self can authenticate itself and remains self-established because it does not depend on anything else for its existence. The

identity and difference distinction made by Taylor does not accurately apply to the Ātman because it underlies all distinctions and cannot be part of any distinction itself.

If Taylor is writing from the perspective of ordinary knowledge as Śaṅkara claims, it is necessary to discuss what the latter means by the jīva or lower, phenomenal self, a psychical and physical complex. Although the jīva refers to the individual person existing in the world, it is in essence identical to the Ātman. The jīva is, however, limited by adjuncts (*upādhis*).[17] Therefore, it is referred to as a mere reflection of the Ātman. Just as the appearance of the sun in a pool of water is a mere reflection and nothing real, the embodied limited jīva, which is immersed in avidyā (ignorance) is a mere reflection of the ultimate reality, representing both reality and appearance.[18] But when the jīva is grasped as identical with the Ātman it is properly viewed as reality. In comparison to the Ātman, which is a subject only, the jīva represents both the subject (knower) and the object (as the object of self-consciousness). If the jīva is metaphorically like the space within a jar, when the limitations caused by the jar are removed, the space within the jar merges with universal space. Likewise, when the limitations of the jīva are removed, it becomes one with the Ātman.[19] This monistic identity is beyond the ken and philosophical sensitivity of Taylor, whereas Śaṅkara wants to make it absolutely clear that there is no reality beyond what either knows or is known.[20]

Within his work, Taylor calls into question the prevalent western tendency to give the subject priority over the predicate that renders the subject independent. Since they both possess identical content and due to the relational character of predicates, it is not possible to distinguish the self except through predicates. This suggests the self is involved in a series of fluctuating relations and is not independent. This scenario for the self has two important consequences: 'The play of the relational network both destroys the integrity of the autonomous self and exposes the pretensions of the all-knowing *cogito*.'[21] Taylor's deconstructed self is decentred, a transitory point of intersection, a locus of various relationships, co-relative, without identity, and defined as empty. Thus the self-identical self of traditional western thought has disappeared.

Of course, Taylor could make the same charge against Śaṅkara, although from the perspective of the Indian thinker, Taylor misses the possibility that Ātman is non-different from Brahman, ultimate reality itself. According to Śaṅkara, the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (6.16.3) presents an excellent expression of this relationship in the formula tat tvam asi (That you are) which he refers to as the mahāvākya or great saying. The meaning of this saying is made lucid by Deutsch: 'If the "thou" denotes the pure consciousness underlying human being, and the "that" the pure consciousness which is the ground of divine being then a complete identity between them does indeed exist.'[22] When one knows oneself to be the true reality then notions based on distinctions disappear with this realization. Thus one can proclaim, as Śaṅkara dies, that ' I am the Universal, I am the All, I am transcendent, the One without a second. I am Absolute and Infinite knowledge, I am Bliss and indivisible.'[23] Once this intuitive insight dawns, an apparently impossible occurrence for Taylor, one is no longer subject to saṃsāra (rebirth, suffering).

After deconstruction of the western view of the self, Taylor turns to a reformulation in postmodern terms. With the disappearance of the self, what are left are markings, a from of tracing that signifies the end of authentic selfhood. As a trace, the non-identical self is both present and absent at the same time, fundamentally relational, caught in temporal becoming, lacking proximity, without immediacy, and devoid of presence. This trace of a self reveals itself as impropriety, expropriation, and dispossession. This self as a trace is simultaneously non-identical to itself and other to itself. It finds without identity in an incessantly fluctuating and interconnected series of traces. After the disappearance of the self of identity, what is left is a self that is stained and wounded: 'This stain cannot be cleansed, and this wound cannot be healed.'[24] Lacking a lucidly defined inwardness and outwardness, the leftover self is a marginal and liminal being, since it contains the marks of the margin. The self that is no longer becomes eccentric, errant and related to Hermes: 'As a kinsman of Hermes, the errant subject is not only a trickster but a thief. The expropriation of the subject robs the self of all purely personal properties.'[25]

In response to this postmodern and even somewhat Buddhist view of the self, Śaṅkara states that the self (Ātman) is free from

the change caused by temporality.[26] The Ātman is also not basically relational for Śaṅkara: 'Nobody belongs to Me and I do not belong to anybody, for I am non-dual and nothing that is falsely constructed exists.'[27] Even if an object of knowledge changes depending on factors like time and space, the knowing subject is not altered and it maintains its eternal and ontological presence. It is, however, impossible to conceive of the self changing from its authentic nature. Since the Ātman transcends space and time and represents the absolute reality within each person, the liberating realization that one is the Ātman is an interior experience that takes place within the individual, and does not occur between oneself and another person, or between a person and the world. Moreover, the Ātman is not something with which a person can enter into relationship because any such relationship presupposes difference, which possesses no ultimate reality in Śaṅkara's philosophy.

The non-present, acentric, crucified, and anonymous self of Taylor's conception is engaged in a process of kenosis, a continual self-emptying of independent individuals. Kenosis empties the self of any intrinsic particularity.[28] Lacking any identity, all selves are marked as faceless in the process of kenosis. This faceless entity becomes the new subject who is characterized by the three d's: death, desire, and delight. Death, a force in life, is within the subject as a parasite, which lives within it and does not simply negate it. As desire, the empty subject does not actively seek satisfaction; 'The desiring subject discovers an other within that forever disrupts the calm of simple self-identity.'[29] If the satisfaction of the desiring self is possessive, its inversion is delight, which is non-possessive.[30] This new subject characterized by death, desire, and delight is both a self-negation and an affirmation. In short, it is a liminal being. In contrast to Taylor, Śaṅkara thinks that death, desire, and delight are limitations of the self and not in any sense affirmative. Moreover, Taylor's process of kenosis shares more in common with the ascetic and meditative practices of Nikāya Buddhism. It is not unreasonable for a person to imagine hypothetically Śaṅkara telling Taylor that he could get rid of his inherited Cartesian doubt and eliminate his radical skepticism by the certainty provided by knowledge (jñāna). From *Śaṅkara's* standpoint, knowing the truth of Ātman dissolves all differences.

SELF AND BODY

From one point of view, the Ātman (self), *prakṛti* (substance, body) and God form a unity according to Rāmānuja. The body is defined as a substance that can be totally controlled, which makes the body a mode of the self.[31] As a mode, the body possesses a borrowed being in the sense that it is dependent on the self for its ontological foundation. Two features are necessary for a thing to be called a mode (*prakāra*): it cannot exist independently apart from that which supports it, and it must be unintelligible apart from its foundation. With respect to the body and self, this means that the body cannot exist apart from the self and cannot be comprehended isolated from the self.[32] According to Lacan, one's relationship with the other enables one to become aware of oneself as a body.[33]

Unlike Lacan, Rāmānuja thinks that the Ātman and the body are interdependent, although the latter is completely subordinate to the former.[34] In the sense that the body is a mode of the Ātman, it sustains the Ātman and provides it with the means for its release.[35] Since the self does not grant the body its existence in any absolute sense, the ontological dependence of the body upon the self is not total, even though the self does render support to the body. The Ātman is the ground of the body in the sense that it animates, guides, and supports the body. In contrast, the body particularizes the self because it is indissolubly connected with it, and it qualifies the Ātman as its mode because of its dependence on the self.[36] The basic difference between the self and body is that the former is eternal and the latter is perishable, even though both are determined by their karma. Due to the body, the Ātman can perform actions and gain contact with objects within the world through bodily senses that can result in pleasure or pain.[37]

In contrast to Rāmānuja, Lacan thinks that a person knows oneself as a body, although there is no good reason why this should be the case because one is within one's corporeal substance. One gains awareness of oneself as a body by means of the exchange with the other.[38] This is also true with respect to desire for Lacan: 'It is in so far as he recognizes his desire in the body of the other that the exchange takes place. It is in so far as his desire has gone over to the other side that he

assimilates himself to the body of the other and recognizes himself as body.'[39] In contrast to Lacan, Levinas views the body as an intersection of physical forces that allows one to grasp hold of the world by labouring in it. As Levinas states: 'But labor is possible only in a being that has the structure of the body, a being grasping beings, that is, recollected at home with itself and only *in relation* with the non-I.'[40] And yet Levinas acknowledges the ambiguity of the body that he equates with consciousness.[41] The ambiguity to be found in Levinas' conception of the body is transformed into a radical skepticism by Derrida: 'Ever since I have had a body I am not this body, hence I do not possess it.'[42] Derrida concludes by asserting that one's body has been stolen from one by the other.

From the perspective of Rāmānuja's philosophy, the Ātman and the body, a mode of the self, both constitute the body of God. Moreover, the body and Ātman are modes of God, who animates and supports them. As Rānānuja elaborates, 'In other words, the individual soul is itself ensouled by Brahman, for the soul is a modification of Brahman because it constitutes His body...'[43] A correlative concept, contrary to the philosophical position of Śaṅkara, is that the world is real since the entire universe is ensouled by Brahman. If the cosmos is the body of Brahman, this does not mean that the cosmos is an open or closed system. It is rather a collective term for an aggregate of conscious or non-conscious finite beings in their empirical, bodily form or groups of these entities. [44] Since the selves and the material world constitute the body of Brahman, they are teleologically oriented toward the realization of Brahman.[45] At this juncture, Rāmānuja's philosophy avoids problems associated with an invisible and disembodied conception of God because his God possesses a body, which would allow him to infer potentially from God's bodily activity the selfhood of God, if one agrees that selfhood can be inferred from behaviour.

There is no such direction or eventual goal bo be achieved in Lacan's conception of the self or subject. Lacan does not understand the self as an autonomous, self-conscious subject; it is rather what he calls correlative. In other words, the self is what it is because of its relation to the other.[46] And this other is in no sense a transcendent being, as it is for Rāmānuja. Lacan's subject is always divided because of an innate tension

between the subject and the ego and a desire that cannot be satisfied by achieving any mundane or transcendent goal or experience. The subject cannot give a name to that which it desires. Although Rāmānuja does not use this kind of terminology, we can say fairly accurately that he conceives of that self as concentric. In contrast, Lacan's self is irreducibly excentric. If Rāmānuja's self possesses the potential to return to itself and discover its true identity, Lacan's self is not able to return to its true identity or even be comfortable with itself in comparison to Rāmānuja's notion of the self. The subject is always incomplete for Lacan.

According to Rāmānuja's commentary on the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the essential nature of the Ātman is knowledge.[47] In his commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras*, he explicitly equates the essence of the self with consciousness.[48] The self possesses consciousness, its self-luminous aspect that makes it possible for the self to become to itself. This implies that the self is not only aware of objects in the world, but it is also able to cognitively grasp itself as a knowing self. It is, however, the self that provides the substrate of consciousness and the fundamental foundation for acts of consciousness.[49] Since the essence of the self, an eternal self-conscious subject, is consciousness, Rāmānuja's position agrees with Śaṅkara on this point about the nature of the self. They differ, however, because Rāmānuja refuses to identify the self with pure consciousness because consciousness is always qualified, possesses specific attributes, belongs to a subject, and indicates an object.[50] In contrast to both Indian philosophers, Lacan offers a more complex view of consciousness because of the tension between the ego and subject: 'Consciousness in man is by essence a polar tension between an ego alienated from the subject and a perception which fundamentally escapes it, a pure *percipi*.'[51] It is the ego that is the culprit, by preventing the subject from becoming identical to this perception.

The self contains a number of other characteristics for Rāmānuja. It is atomic (*aṇu*) in size in contrast to Brahman who is omnipresent (*sarvagata*).[52] For Rāmānuja, the self is not a passive entity: 'Besides being the knower, the self is also the doer of actions.'[53] Even though the self is an agent of actions, it is still eternal and unchanging.[54] Accepting a plurality of

selves, Rāmānuja also stresses that there is a difference between the individual Ātmans, a difference that is real and not illusory, because the selves are separate according to the bodies they support.[55]

If we look at the problem of the self in Lacan's work by focusing on the ego, we will notice a complex problem because the ego, which is other than the subject, is an imaginary construction. The ego is trapped between disintegration and a wholeness that is delusionary. It is more akin to an imaginary function and object because the real 'I' is not the ego: 'Literally, the ego is an—object which fills a certain function which we here call the imaginary function.'[56] If a subject views oneself in the ego, one does not see one's true identity due to the fact that one is not truly seeing oneself because one's true identity gets lost in the unconscious. With this fundamental split between the subject and the ego, there is thus a basic alienation within a person. With respect to the ego, the subject is decentred for Lacan, whereas it is the process of karma and ignorance that decenter the self for Rāmānuja, although the self is innately centered and whole for the Indian thinker. There is no hope of the self attaining wholeness for Lacan, like there is for Rāmānuja.

Not only is the self different from other selves—a particular Ātman is also different from God.[57] By stating that the self is distinguishable from God and other souls, Rāmānuja stresses the uniqueness of the individual as a person and concomitantly of God and other selves. Moreover, the self is different from the body; it is immortal and the body is a perishable entity.[58] Lacan stands in partial agreement with Rāmānuja concerning the necessity for emphasizing difference, although the former takes this distinction much further by affirming that whatever identity is attained by the subject is located in difference. This identity is nothing permanent because the subject continually interjects images of the others in an attempt to develop an idealized self and also reprojecting this self-image onto others. What complicates matters is that the subject's relation to others is grounded on mutual competition and alienation. Harmony can only be instituted through language because the subject can be formed by it. In fact, the subject is a function of language because it emerges in and through it, whereas Rāmānuja perceives the need for a personal relationship between the self and God.

This personal relationship is conceived as the submission of the self to God for Rāmānuja. In fact, the self is a *śeṣa* (slave) of God, which means that the Ātman is subordinate and subservient to God.[59] Since Brahman is the efficient and material cause of the universe, all existent entities have originated from God, who is their *śeṣin* (ruler). To be a śeṣa (slave) of God entails one's dependence on Him. These existent entities constitute His body, and they thus modify God.[60] God is not, however, dependent on them, but they are rather dependent on God who maintains them as their inner ruler.[61] If a student were to ask Rāmānuja the motivating rationale for God serving as the inner ruler of selves, his reply is that God lives within the selves in order to save them.[62]

Although the self is dependent, originates, and constitutes God's body, it is different than God: 'For as the luminous body is a nature different from that of its light, thus the highest self differs from the individual soul which is a part of it.'[63] Therefore, the famous Upaniṣadic, philosophical formula—tat tvam asi—does not convey the idea of absolute unity for Rāmānuja, as it does for Śaṅkara, but rather denotes Brahman as distinguished by difference.[64] The word *tvam* denotes Brahman as being qualified by the Ātman, which constitutes its body.[65] And according to his commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras*, Rāmānuja argues against Śaṅkara's non-dualist interpretation of the formula by stating that the non-verbal terms refer to Brahman 'distinguished by difference.'[66] Moreover, to argue for an absolute non-dualism means that Brahman would be associated with ignorance and be the basis of all defects and afflictions, which originate with it. By denying that Brahman can be a substrate and possess attributes, it is impossible to demonstrate the possibility of either error or sublation.[67]

In contrast to this line of thinking by Rāmānuja, the thought of Lacan is far removed because it is difficult to see a place for something like Brahman in his system of thought. Lacan leaves us with an incomplete self in which self-consciousness is an impossibility. Divided against itself, decentred, excentric, caught between a false view of wholeness and disintegration, trapped by paranoiac alienation, and a narcissistic fool for the idealized self-image that one projects unto the other, the subject is no one in particular. Even though the subject for Lacan is the

opposite of the other, the subject can never realize its identity because it represents a pure negativity, a nothing. In comparison to Rāmānuja, there can be no self for Lacan because there is no such thing as a total person. Lacan's subject is condemned to an internal, external, and interrelational alienation, which only ends with death.

OTHERWISE THAN NON-SELF

For Levinas, the ego or I is an existent, a way of being that breaks out of itself and projects itself forth. Since the ego is a mode of existing itself, it does not exist in a strict sense, but it stands outside of the oppositions between permanent and impermanent and the categories of being and nothingness.[68] This suggests that it exists by transcending itself. The ego is also a substance: 'The I is not a substance endowed with thought; it is a substance because it is endowed with thought.'[69] An ego forms an identification and bond with itself because it is both for itself and with itself.[70] Within the world, the ego is both attracted to and withdraws from things, which implies that the ego possesses an inside and outside dimension.[71]

Although the Nikāya Buddhists acknowledge a so-called conventional self that represents a continuous series of processes, including becoming, birth, maturation, death, and rebirth, there is strictly speaking no such thing as a permanent self. In comparison to Levinas, the Buddhist philosophy of non-self (*anattā*) does not recognize the self as having the ability to transcend itself. It possesses no enduring substance, is without identification, and lacks any internal or external dimension that can be construed as permanent because what is ordinarily labelled a self is subject to a continuous cycle of change. Collins calls the Buddhist denial of the self a linguistic taboo and a strategy in mental culture. He summarizes his position in the following way: 'I have argued that the doctrine of *anattā* is, in the last analysis, a linguistic taboo in technical discourse; and that this taboo functions as a soteriological strategy, in two ways: in detail it forms part of a particular style of meditative self-analysis within the practice of Buddhist specialists; in general, acceptance of the linguistic taboo preserves the identity and integrity of Buddhism as an Indian system separate

from Brahmanism.'[72] Moreover, the Buddhist denial of a permanent self does not represent a form of nihilism because its philosophy attempts to avoid the extremes of permanent being and nihilist non-being, and those of strict determinism and uncertain indeterminism.[73]

The internal structure of the ego, as an existent for Levinas, is temporality. Levinas stresses the present moment: 'The present is not a segment of duration; it is a function of it: it is this coming out of a self, this appropriation of existence by an existent, which the 'I' is. Consciousness, position, the 'I', are not initially—although they are finally—existents. They are events by which the unnamable verb *to be* turns into substantives. They are hypostasis.'[74] This quotation needs some further explanation. Hypostasis is an event by which the self draws together with its existing in neither a substantial or non-substantial way.[75] Hypostasis gives rise to solitude, a unity between the self and its existing, which is essential for the self gaining mastery over existing.[76] Levinas rejects a concept of time as a succession of instants. The ego is expressed in the present and 'is itself equivalent to the present.'[77] The dynamic aspect of the ego is located in the very presence of the present moment, which involves a return of consciousness to itself. Presence is something that the ego incessantly takes up again. Coming from itself, the present does not last.

The Buddhists agree with Levinas that the self, or more precisely what we ordinarily mistakenly call the self, is intimately connected to temporality, although in a more radical sense than Levinas is capable of admitting. Instead of a permanent self, the Buddhists refer to impersonal, conditioned elements that are directly subject to the cycle of time and causation (paṭiccasamuppāda) without giving rise to the event of hypostasis. From the Buddhists' perspective, the world and everything within it are composed of an unceasing flow of dhammas (elements), compound things, minute parts, which are multiple, momentary, impersonal, and conditional, and thus form the foundation of existence and consciousness, even though they are impermanent (anicca). Levinas and the Buddhists agree, however, that the present takes precedence over the other moments of time. In fact, the present moment is the only reality—no matter how brief—for the Buddhists.[78] Since the objectivity of

causation is emphasized in Nikāya Buddhism, it is not a subjective category created by the mind, but it is rather a causal explanation of how the self is maintained concurrently with suffering and to serve as a substitute for 'an empirical causal explanation of the (relative) origin and development of the individual in place of an explanation in terms of metaphysical first causes or final causes.'[79] The chain of causation also indicates that being is a beginningless sequence of momentary states that makes it impossible for a self to endure. In distinction to Levinas, Nikāya Buddhists would disagree that the self can assume presence even for a moment. With their emphasis on causation, relativity, and lack of presence of the self, Buddhists appear to have more in common with Taylor and Derrida.[80]

In contrast to the Buddhists, the ego is reflected in a self by a relationship that Levinas calls inwardness.[81] To be a self is one's primal identity for Levinas. The self is identical in two basic senses: it remains the same even though it may experience change, and it 'hearkens to itself thinking or takes before its depths and is itself an other.'[82] This suggests that the self is not autonomous and does not constitute itself because it exists as an existent with others within a world. 'The *way* of the I against the 'other' of the world consists in *sojourning*, in *identifying oneself* by existing here *at home with oneself* [*chez soi*].'[83] Therefore, dwelling is the basic mode of maintaining oneself. As the self dwells within the world, it exists with others, and it establishes contact with others through dialogical interaction. Moreover, for a self to be truly related to itself presupposes its relation to an other. By the self entering into a relationship with the other and having the other return to the self, this double movement possesses important consequences for the self because it becomes decentred by the return of alterity.[84] In other words, the self is being continually uprooted and decentred by the other.

The Nikāya Buddhists disagree with Levinas when he claims that the self possesses an identity. If a name represents a person's identity, the Buddhists think that a name is a mere 'denotation, appellation, designation, a current usage' behind which there is nothing substantial.[85] A name is thus a label that one places on a grouping of five aggregates *pañcupānakkhandha*, which are constantly subject to flux and impermanence, that

one falsely assumes to be a person. The Buddhists invite others to examine this grouping in a spirit of empirical scientific objectivity in order to discover the truth for themselves. The initial impermanent aggregate is the *rūpa* (body, matter) which is composed of the elements of solidity, fluidity, heat, and motion and their derivatives.[86] The other aggregates are: *vedanā* (sensations, mood, feeling); *saññā* (perceptions); *saṃkhāra* (volition, will); viññaṇa (consciousness).[87] Since these five interdependent aggregates are constantly changing, lack a permanent identity, give the false impression of being an ego or I, and condition each other, they are referred to as suffering (dukkha).[88] By analysing the self by means of the five aggregates, the Buddhist attempt to undermine any sense of a unified self. The Buddhist want to assert that which we ordinarily assume to be a self does not remain identical for two consecutive moments, which means that the self does not have an enduring identity, as Levinas asserts. And within the scheme of the Buddhist conception of time and causation, there is no self with an identity or a form of consciousness that transmigrates to another mode of existence after the death of the five aggregates. This is because it is rather an impulse of kammic energy that forms a new entity.[89]

Even if the Nikāya Buddhists are correct about there being no permanent self, individuals do have experiences often of a self. The Buddhists acknowledge this personal experience and account for it by the stream of consciousness (*viññaṇasota*), which is not to be confused with a pure experience because dispositions, feelings, perceptions condition it, and memories.[90] Consciousness is also dependent upon the four other aggregates, apart from which it cannot function, and causation.[91] This suggests not only the dependent nature of consciousness, but it also indicates its impermanent, non-eternal, and non-substantial nature. It can, however, explain the continuity of an individual, while disposition (saṅkhāra) represents individuation.[92]

The Buddhists and Levinas agree that the self is not autonomous, but they agree for totally different reasons. The Buddhists do not agree with Levinas that the other possesses the significance that the latter accords to it. Since the Buddhists assert that there is no permanent self that possesses a personal identity, this is also necessarily true of the other, an aggregate

of five inseparable physical and mental elements or qualities. If there is no self-identical person to be discovered or encountered under the ever-changing aggregates, there is no such thing as a person or an other.[93] Moreover, there is no true presence of a particular being because one is a 'bundle of conditioned factors.'[94] Without being, there can be no presence, and without a permanent self, there is no self to be present. It is apparent that the self and other have the same epistemological and soteriological status in Nikāya Buddhism.[95]

Since the self and other have the same variable structure in Buddhism, it is not possible for the other to decentre the self, as it does for Levinas. In fact, the anattā (non-self) doctrine of Buddhism is designed to help one become decentred in the sense of becoming detached to the false notion of self. This doctrine is also intended to totally terminate the love of self. The basic Buddhist advice is: 'Cut out the love of self as you would an autumn lily with the hand.'[96] By loving the self, one is merely adding to one's pain and suffering. The Buddhist ascetic regime, which is summarized in the eightfold path, is designed to enable one to become detached and decentred from oneself and the other. Again, with the emphasis on an innately decentred self, the Buddhists share more in common with Taylor and Derrida than with Levinas because Nikāya Buddhism denies that there is something metaphysically substantial behind the five aggregates. In other words, there is no self that possesses ontological presence for the Nikâya Buddhists, Taylor, and Derrida.

The self is otherwise than being for Levinas because he wants to emphasize its subjectivity. The subjectivity and uniqueness of a self includes desire for the non-desirable, responsibility for one's neighbour, and substitution as a hostage. Responsibility is not something that one can escape: 'The I before the other is infinitely responsible.'[97] By responsibility, Levinas does not mean love, altruism, or benevolence. Responsibility is a process that empties the I of its egoism and confirms its uniqueness.[98] What makes responsibility so necessary for Levinas is that the self exists through and for the other.[99] The self must assume a position of submission in relation to the other to the extent of becoming a substitute, a form of passivity and not an act, or a hostage for the other. Levinas explains, 'It is a being divesting itself, emptying itself if its being, turning itself inside out, and if it can be put thus, the fact of "otherwise than being" '[100] By assuming the role of a hostage, the self increases its degree of responsibility for the other and helps one to grasp the true meaning of compassion, pity, pardon and proximity. Becoming a substitute for the other, one gains liberation because one is freed from any imprisonment to itself, which suggests for Levinas that one's being is undone and one becomes oneself, what one is and not another.[101] What Levinas does consistently is to transform ontological categories into ethical terms. Although there are differences to be found between Levinas and the Buddhists with respect to one's relation to others, they can find much agreement between them about the importance of reaching out, helping, and reducing barriers between oneself and another.

The individual Buddhist is able to reduce the distance between him/herself by meditating upon and practising the divine abidings (*brahmavihāras*): loving-kindness (*mettā*); compassion (*karuṇa*); sympathetic joy (*mudita*); equanimity (*upekkhā*), which are the most correct attitudes to have toward other human beings.[102] Loving-kindness involves benevolent harmlessness, charity toward others, respect for others, and begins with oneself, and also involves the destruction of narrow selfish interests and eradication of greed and hatred.[103] After beginning with oneself, one gradually extends it to others until one can radiate this influence to the entire universe. By not distinguishing between the suffering of oneself and others, one practises compassion in an emotionally detached manner. Sympathetic joy means rejoicing in the success and happiness of others without envy, jealousy, or hypocrisy.[104] Finally, equanimity demands that one become emotionally neutral and detached in order for one's action to be devoid of any kammic results.[105] These virtues help one to witness the equality of all beings, and they embody the essential spirit of what Levinas means by responsibility and assuming the role of a hostage. Although the divine abidings do not confirm the uniqueness of the self, they share with Levinas' notion of responsibility its ability to empty the self of egoism.

The identity of the self for itself or what Levinas calls ipseity is not present before itself and is not present in itself: 'There

is no ipseity common to me and the others; "me" is the exclusion from this possibility of comparison, as soon as comparison is set up. The ipsiety is then a privilege or an unjustifiable election that chooses me and not the ego. I am unique and chosen; the election is in the subjection.'[106] The identity of the self is given in an affective experience that is pleasurable and beyond its being. Due to the affective experience connected to finding the self, it cannot be observed or intuited. In comparison, the Nikāya Buddhists assert that there is no enduring identity of the self, and they leave us with an impersonal, impermanent, conditioned, and non-identifiable aggregate that only gives us the false impression of a self. Levinas can counter the Buddhist position by asserting that the self acts, knows and perceives, and thus it must possess an identity. The Buddhists respond to Levinas that there is action, but there is no actor. There is also knowing and consciousness, but there is no knower and no one who is conscious.[107]

DIFFERENCE AND PRESENCE

Madhva's emphasis on the importance of difference also pertains to his discussion of the self, whereas Abhinavagupta takes a divergent philosophical approach. The individual self is to be distinguished from God, prakṛti (matter, body), and the other for Madhva. The self is a reflection of God due to its eternal nature and not like the perishable body. Although the self is eternal by virtue of its essence and existence, it is also imperfect because of its finite qualities, whereas God possesses no limitations or imperfections and is considerably different than the self.[108] The self and other are also distinct because each is a unique centre of conscious experience, which is non-transferable. Since the self and other cannot enter into the distinctive experiences of each other, these conscious experiences distinguish one self from another.[109] And like Rāmānuja, Madhva accepts the plurality of selves and their uniqueness. In comparison to Madhva, Abhinavagupta does not share his emphasis on difference. According to Abhinavagupta, the self is transcendent by nature, possessing the form of Śiva, an agent of action, and possesses an independent consciousness.[110] This self is eternal and, due to its immutable nature, is incapable

of transformation.[111] Abhinavagupta argues that transformation occurs to inert matter or object of knowledge and not to pure consciousness.[112] Moreover, one is not ultimately different from other selves. The liberated person sees his own self in everything and every being.[113]

In comparison to the positions of Madhva and Abhinavagupta on the self to this point, Derrida cannot accept the implication made by the philosophies of the two Indian thinkers that the self represents presence. Derrida demonstrates his diametrically opposite position by deconstructing the statement 'Here I am.' This quotation appears to do two things: it effaces the present nature of any such exactly duplicate quotation, and it indicates that the self is not present as itself and cannot make itself present to itself.[114] Moreover, Derrida connects the self with the trace: 'The trace is the erasure of selfhood, of one's own presence, and is constituted by the threat or anguish of its irremediable disappearance, of the disappearance of its disappearance.'[115] This type of statement is the foundation for Taylor affirming the disappearance of the self, as previously discussed in this chapter. Since the self is a true trace and not an illegitimate one, an unerasable trace, there can be no presence of the self because a trace possesses the ability to inscribe itself as a difference between the breaches it creates in space. And the dual powers of repetition and erasure make full presence impossible for the self.

The fundamental difference between the self and God for Madhva is not only applicable in the phenomenal world, but it is also true in the states of sleep, death, and upon the self reaching final release.[116] Even though the self is distinct from God and there is no identity between them, it is absolutely dependent upon God. It is God who propels the self to action in accordance with its previous actions, innate tendencies, and effort.[117] In sharp contrast to Madhva, Abhinavagupta affirms that the self is essentially one with Śiva and self-identical. It erroneously conceives of itself as diverse objects and subjects due to ignorance.[118] The difference that Madhva finds in the relationship between God and the self and the self and other things is not shared by Abhinavagupta, who thinks that reality is a singular, pure consciousness (*saṃvid*) which becomes manifested as many.

In response to these Indian philosophers, Derrida and Kristeva cannot accept the transcendent and eternal nature of the self because it lacks any stability or presence. Kristeva, who views the self as part of a process of development, does not share Abhinavagupta's assertion about the lack of transformation of the self. This process indicates a self that is heterogeneous and decentred because the self experiences splitting apart, resulting in a self that speaks and another person that is addressed.[119] This process of development also involves the splitting apart of the subject itself, which results in a plurality of emergent selves. This temporally conceived process means that the self cannot be fixed as an ontological entity and cannot be identified as a linguistic object. Rather than permanence, presence, or identity, Kristeva views the self as an infinite series of continually fluctuating signifiers. The two most important phases of this process of development are the mirror state, which produces the spatial intuition in a child that it must remain separate from its image unified in a mirror, and castration, which completes the process of separation by detaching the child from its dependence on the mother.[120] A parallel division of the other accompanies the splitting of the self.[121] Therefore, from Kristeva's viewpoint, it is impossible for the self to think that it is identical to the other, like Abhinavagupta claims is the case.

Since the self for Madhva is atomic in size, it is possible that it pervades the body.[122] In sharp contrast to Śaṅkara, Madhva claims that the self is an agent and not simply a witness.[123] Madhva's consistency with respect to the difference between the self and God pertains to that which is produced in the mind during meditation.[124] Madhva does not, however, mean that the self possesses complete power of action. God confers whatever freedom of action is possessed by a self.[125] According to Madhva, the self is a doer, enjoyer, and knower, and he agrees with Vedānta philosophers when they define the Ātman as *sat-cit-ānanda* (being, consciousness, and bliss). Abhinavagupta's emphasis is a bit different because he conceives of the self as covered by five sheaths (*kañcukas*): *kalā* (limited action); impure-*vidyā* (knowledge); rāga (attachment); *niyati* (necessity, fate); *kāla* (time). These five sheaths are extensions of māyā (illusion), which forms the sixth sheath. This aggregate of six

sheaths of the self forms its internal limitations, whereas the subtle mental body and the material body form its eternal limitations.[126] These six sheaths hide the true nature of the Ātman, which is also obscured by the three impurities (*malas*): *āṇavamala; karma mala; māyiya mala.* The initial impurity refers to an innate ignorance that obscures the true nature of the self and originates in a view of a plurality of selves.[127] Karma mala refers to limited actions of the self, whereas the final impurity owes its origin to the first impurity and limits the ability of the self to know.[128]

In response to our Indian philosophers, Derrida suggests that it does not really matter if one thinks that the self is different from God or whether the self is identical to God because the name of God is a trace:

> There is the name of God that names all, before or beyond other names: the trace of the singular events that will have rendered speech possible before it returns back itself, for the sake of its response, about this initial or last reference. This is why the apophatic discourse must also open with a prayer which recognizes, assigns or ensures its destination: the Other as Referent of a *legein* which is not other than its Cause.[129]

Because the name God is a trace, it does not designate anything permanent, not even an ambiguous divinity. Even though the name of God cannot signify this or that entity, it can be grasped as the event of the trace, a negative operation or process of kenosis or emptying. Derrida calls what comes after this event post-scriptum; it is located at he edge of language where the trace becomes more legible.[130] A double movement of withdrawing and overflowing is to be discovered at the precipice of language. The event of the trace forms a seal that guards a secret. In response, Abhinavagupta thinks that Derrida misses the possibility that the name of God and God as a trace is both embodied by the reality itself. From Madhva's perspective, one's difference from God protects the reality of God from the philosophical games of human beings.

By means of its consciousness, the self is self-luminous for Madhva which suggests that it can reveal itself to itself, although its consciousness represents a distinct feature. The self is not only a knowing subject, it can also become the object of its own knowledge for Madhva. Abhinavagupta agrees with Madhva that

the self is self-luminous, and it can know itself by means of the power of consciousness (*vimarśa*). When it realizes the state of pure consciousness it becomes liberated mokṣa.[131] Derrida responds to both Indian thinkers by asserting that whatever form it may take, humans can only conceive of consciousness as self-presence. Derrida calls into question the privileged position of presence in general: 'Presence is a determination and effect within a system which is no longer that of presence but that of difference...'[132] By achieving absolute knowledge like that advocated by some Indian thinkers, this gives one full presence, an absolute self-presence in consciousness, that Derrida claims is the end of the infinite because it becomes a 'unity of the concept, logos, and consciousness in a voice without *differance*.'[133] Moreover, Derrida prophesies the end of the history of self-presence gained by attaining absolute knowledge: 'The history of being as presence, as self-presence in absolute knowledge, as consciousness of self in the infinity of *parousia*—this history is closed.'[134] Madhva and Abhinavagupta soften Derrida's criticism because they acknowledge certain limitations of the self.

For Madhva, certain material coils (*āvaranas*) limit the self: *liṅga-śarīra* (subtle body); karma; kāma (desire); avidyā (ignorance). These elements that limit the self do not individually or collectively cause its bondage, which is based more completely on a false assumption of independence by the self and its failure to realize its true nature. The ultimate cause of the bondage of the self is God, and final liberation is thus due to the grace of God, a grace that cannot be influenced by the actions of human beings.[135] The six sheaths and the three impurities have already been mentioned with respect to Abhinavagupta's conception of the state of bondage. And like Madhva, the grace of God plays an important role in the final liberation of the self because it can direct and inspire an individual within the spirit of divine play to seek liberation.[136] This culminates in the complete identity of the self with God, an identity denied by Madhva.

In contrast to these Indian perspectives, the fundamental problem for Kristeva is not bondage, but it is rather rejection, which is a signifying process that tends toward death.[137] Rejection, another aspect of the development of the self, is an excessive renewal that destroys presence, resulting in the disappearance of both the self and object, and divides the other from the self that are both simultaneously splitting apart.[138] Rejection is directly involved in the decentring of the self. The disappearance of the self does not mark the end of this process because the self is continually generated and negated by the *chora*, a non-verbal semiotic articulation of the process.[139] Kristeva defines her term as follows:

> The *chora* is not yet a position that represents something for someone (i.e., it is not a sign); nor is it a *position* that represents someone for another position (i.e., it is not yet a signifier either); it is, however, generated in order to attain to this signifying position. Neither model nor copy, the *chora* precedes and underlies figuration and thus specularization, and is analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm.[140]

Kristeva wants to maintain that the chora possesses no unity and no identity; it is a repetitive process that effectuates discontinuities and ruptures and precedes evidence, space, time, and verisimilitude.[141] From the very beginning of its arrival, the chora provokes a separation of the self from an object and eventual absence of the self.[142] This repetitive process indicates that the self is never present, but it is rather a mere signifying process.

IDENTITY AND SELF-RECOGNITION

According to Charles Taylor, the self is a being of complexity and depth because its identity is shaped by others, it is involved in language, it undergoes change, it understands itself through narrative, it occupies space and time, and it is characterized by reason. Radhakrishnan shares many of the same concerns and opinions as Taylor about the nature of the self, although the former expresses himself differently and emphasizes other features of the self. In fact, Radhakrishnan espouses what could be called a metaphysical self in contrast to Taylor.

The personal identity of the self is determined, for Taylor, by the public space that it occupies with others, who approve or disapprove of what we do and say, but who most importantly influence what the self becomes. The way the self speaks, walks

gestures, and thinks is shaped by its relationship to others and their influence upon the self. The space occupied by the self, its commitments, and identifications create a horizon within which the self makes decisions and takes a stand, and it helps to define the identity of the self. Taylor states,, 'Our identity is what allows us to define what is important to us and what is not.'[143] Thus, for Taylor, the self is a decision-maker and can only be defined in relationship to others that surround it. It is not that Radhakrishnan perceives the other as necessarily an obstacle, but he rather sees the self immersed in what is truly alien to it, which makes it difficult for it to gain self-knowledge. Regardless of its relationship to others, the self is a unity of body, mind, and spirit for Radhakrishnan.[144] Even though the self is embodied, it must extricate itself from its body without despising or abusing it because the body is subject to change, while the self does not experience change.

Taylor also thinks that the self defines itself from within its language. In fact, it is impossible to be a self without a language: 'A self exists only within what I call "webs of interlocution".'[145] What Taylor means is that one can only become a self in dialogue with others because they play an essential role in the self gaining identity, and the others also play a role in assisting the self gain self-understanding within its given language. This occurs within a context of change and becoming for the self, a position at odds with that of Radhakrishnan because the self is constant and unchanging within the incessant flux of the world for him, a position very similar to that of Śaṅkara.[146]

In sharp contrast to Radhakrishnan, Taylor argues that we understand our lives in narrative form, an aspect that gives us coherence and enables us to adequately respond to the many questions that surround us. It is our personal narrative that tells us who we are by informing us about how we became who we are and indicating where we are going. Therefore, a coherent narrative brings together the past, present, and future. The personal narrative of the self not only structures the present of the self, but it also informs the self in what direction it is moving.[147] Thus, besides its spatial dimension, the self possesses a temporal depth that can be grasped as a quest of Taylor. It is not narratives that help us to discover our true self for Radhakrishnan, but rather: 'In the moment of its highest

insight, the self becomes aware not only of its own existence but of the existence of an omnipresent spirit of which it is, as it were, a focusing. We belong to the real and the real is mirrored in us.'[148] Radhakrishnan's fundamental presupposition is that it is impossible to know the truth without being the truth. The attainment of this awareness depends on self-renunciation, inward purity, and self-mastery.[149]

Taylor and Radhakrishnan agree that a modern notion of the self is constituted by a certain sense of inwardness. If we look at the language of self-understanding for Taylor, we find, for instance, the opposition between inside-outside: 'We think of our thoughts, ideas, or feelings as being "within" us, while the objects in the world which these mental states bear on are "without".'[150] In sharp contrast to Taylor's position, Radhakrishnan thinks that it is the divine that is 'both in us and out of us.'[151] This suggests that the divine, which is neither totally transcendent nor completely immanent, is the source of the perfection of the self. Taylor and Radhakrishnan also disagree about the issue of the decentring of the self. Taylor finds evidence of a trend to decentre the self in twentieth-century art, representing a displacing of interest to something else, but he does not lament this trend because 'Decentring is not the alternative to inwardness; it is its complement.'[152] From Radhakrishnan's perspective, the self is the centre of a person's being.[153]

Taylor thinks that things that have significance for it determine the identity of the self. The identity of the self is alsc partially constituted by its self-interpretation.[154] This self-interpretation, which is based on one's self-awareness, takes place within moral-ethical space, 'a space in which questions arise about what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what not, what has meaning and importance for you and what is trivial and secondary.'[155] The self can decide what to do, can determine what is meaningful, and can discern what is important by means of its rationality. Besides its rationality, the self possesses a creative imagination, freedom, dignity, rights, and self-expression for Taylor. According to Radhakrishnan, it is impossible for the self to be determined by external things of significance or self-interpretation. The self-recognition conceived by Radhakrishnan is an intuitive knowing or insight

that is direct, immediate, free of doubt, complete, and self-validating.[156] Intuitive insight, an integral experience, is a type of knowledge that is beyond reason, although it is not opposed to reason. It reveals reality in its integrity, and represents knowledge by identity.[157] Radhakrishnan does, however, agree with Taylor that the self is rational. However, Radhakrishnan insists that reason, an outgrowth of intuition, is not complete because contradiction and antinomies often characterize it.

With Radhakrishnan's emphasis on intuition and the awareness of the identity that it brings, Taylor can claim that the Indian philosopher is not discussing a personal self, which can only develop historically and in ethical relationship with others. Replying for Radhakrishnan and other Indian philosophers, Mohanty states, 'It is not true that Indian philosophy does not have a concept of person. However, the concept of subject was the dominating concept, and, under its dominance, the concept of person remained philosophically underdeveloped.'[158]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have witnessed that Mark C. Taylor and his deconstruction of the self in the western tradition results in very little agreement with Śaṅkara. The deconstruction of the self reveals it as an image with a presence that is possible only in the present moment. Taylor's deconstructed self, a synthetic identity, is something stolen from one's possession because writing, which is a thief itself, breaks one's connection to oneself. In one of the few areas of agreement between Taylor and Śaṅkara, the latter thinks that writing is an impermanent action that does not allow one to get closer to the self. Unlike Śaṅkara, Taylor calls into question the identity of the self, and he finds that there is difference within the identity of the self and an absence within the presence of the self, which includes a disrupted presence and a dislocated present moment. Śaṅkara's view of the self is distinctly different from Taylor because the self is present, not subject to time, not marked by death, self-luminous, timeless, spaceless, and unthinkable, although it represents the ground of all distinctions. In contrast, Taylor's deconstructed self is decentred, co-relative, lacking identity, empty, a mere trace or marking of a disappeared self. As a trace, the self of Taylor is non-identical

to itself and other to itself. In short, it is a liminal being, whereas Śaṅkara's notion of the self is free from change and temporality. The liminal being of Taylor is a self emptied by a process of kenosis that leaves the self characterized by death, desire, and delight. This liminal being is both a self-negation and an affirmation, whereas Śaṅkara views death, desire and delight as limitations imposed by Taylor upon the true self. From Śaṅkara's perspective, Taylor is discussing the disappearing of the empirical self, which means that he is viewing the self from the epistemological position of lower knowledge.

Although we have noticed that Lacan and Rāmānuja agree about the importance of emphasizing differences in their respective conceptions of the self, their particular notions of the self are at extreme odds. If the self, body, and God form a unity for Rāmānuja in which the self supports the body in an interdependent relationship, Lacan does not share this view of unity because he thinks that one knows oneself as a body by means of an exchange with the other. Since the self and human bodies are the body of God for Rāmānuja, they are teleologically orientated toward the realization of Brahman, whereas Lacan does not think that the self and body have any such direction or goal. Lacan's self is correlative rather than autonomous and self-conscious. The self of Lacan's conception is also divided and excentric, whereas Rāmānuja's self can be called concentric in the sense that it can return to itself and discover its true identity. In contrast to Rāmānuja, the self of Lacan is always incomplete. If Rāmānuja equates the essence of the self with consciousness, Lacan views consciousness as a polar tension between the ego, an imaginary construct, alienated from the subject. Lacan's ego is trapped between disintegration and wholeness that is delusionary, whereas Rāmānuja is convinced that the possibility of wholeness is a viable possibility. On the one hand, Rāmānuja sees the need for a personal relationship between the self and God, and, on the other hand, Lacan sees mutual competition and alienation between the self and other, which means that the Lacanian self cannot realize its permanent identity because it is a pure negativity.

Even though the Nikāya Buddhists share some similarities with postmodern thinkers like Mark C. Taylor, Kristeva, and Derrida, they do not have much in common with Levinas at first

glance, with the exception of the mutual emphasis on the temporal nature of the self, until one looks at the particular positions with more care. For Levinas, the ego is an existent and a substance, whereas the Buddhists do not recognize a permanent self, do not acknowledge the ability of the self to transcend itself, claim that the self is without enduring substance or identity, and that the self is devoid of internal or external dimensions. The internal structure of the ego is temporality for Levinas, which renders the self present, although this presence does not last. Levinas and the Nikāya Buddhists agree that the present is the primary mode of time, but the latter understand this in a more radical sense because the self cannot assume presence for even a moment. Levinas and the Buddhists also agree that the self is not autonomous, although they agree for different reasons. Levinas asserts that the self exists with others, and it becomes decentred by the other. In contrast to Levinas, the Buddhists argue that the other does not play a significant role in the non-autonomous nature of the self because there is no self-identical person to be discovered, and thus there is no self possessing ontological presence. Levinas' emphasis on the subjectivity—otherwise than being—of the self is intended to stress its responsibility for the other, which is part of a process of emptying the self of egoism and confirmation of its uniqueness. The Buddhists' position with its focus on the divine abidings, which reduces distance between oneself and another and helps one to recognize the equality of all beings, is similar in spirit to Levinas in terms of assuming personal responsibility, playing something akin to the role of the hostage, and emptying the self of egoism.

With the exception of Abhinavagupta and his philosophy, Madhva, Derrida and Kristeva share an emphasis on difference, although this is a rather superficial point of agreement because of the more significant differences between the postmodernists and Indian philosophers. If Abhinavagupta assumes a monistic position in his philosophy and Madhva stresses the difference between the self, God and other, Derrida disagrees with them that the self, a mere trace from the postmodernist's viewpoint, represents some form of presence due to the way that repetition and erasure make full presence impossible. Derrida and Kristeva cannot accept the transcendent and eternal nature of the self.

According the Kristeva, the self is heterogeneous, decentred, and split and so is the other. Madhva and Abhinavagupta consider consciousness an important characteristic of the self, whereas Derrida thinks that consciousness is another form of self-presence. Fundamental differences with respect to the basic limitations of the self are evident for Madhva in the form of material coils, and Abhinavagupta's conception of the six sheaths and three impurities that limit the self are to be sharply distinguished from Kristeva's notion of rejection, an excessive renewal that destroys presence with the result of the disappearance of the self and object. Not only is the self divided from others for Kristeva, but both the self and other are respectively splitting apart within a process of rejection that is directly connected to the decentring of the self. Moreover, within Kristeva's notion of chora, the self is generated and negated in a repetitive process that brings discontinuity, a position in sharp contrast to the conceptions of a permanent self in Madhva and Abhinavagupta.

Finally, Charles Taylor and Radhakrishnan find more about the self with which to agree with each other than the previous group, although their differences are not without significance. With respect to personal identity, Taylor thinks that it is determined by the space we occupy with others, whereas Radhakrishnan views the self more in relation to itself as a unity of body, mind, and spirit than in relationship to the other. The self of Taylor's conception defines itself within language in dialogue with others within a context of change while Radhakrishnan sees the self as constant and unchanging. According to Taylor, knowledge of the true self is gained through narrative, which gives the self coherence, enables it to respond to others, and binds together one's personal time. It is narrative, for Taylor, that helps to account for the spatial and temporal dimension of the self. Rather than the role of narrative, Radhakrishnan stresses the need for an integral experience for a true knowledge of the self. Although both thinkers agree that the self is constituted by a sense of inwardness, they differ about what inwardness means. Radhakrishnan thinks that the divine is a source of perfection for the self, a centre of one's being, whereas Taylor sees decentring as a complement of inwardness. On the problem of identity, Taylor thinks that

identity is determined by self-interpretation, while Radhakrishnan does not think that it is possible for the self to be determined by external things of significance or self-interpretation, stressing instead the need for self-recognition in the form of an intuitive knowing. Both thinkers agree, however, that the self is rational, a point that will be investigated in greater detail in a later chapter.

There is no emphasis on the rationality of the self from Taylor, Lacan, Levinas, Derrida, or Kristeva, which does not mean that they think that the self is irrational. Their positions do suggest, however, the difficulty of attaining rationality by the self, since it is described as disconnected from itself, decentred, correlative, without identity, and a liminal being by Taylor. The self of Lacan is described as correlative, divided, excentric, and alienated. Besides lacking autonomy, the internal structure of the self, for Levinas, is characterized by temporality and impermanence. Derrida thinks that the self is a mere trace, while Kristeva views the self as heterogeneous, decentred, and split within itself. These characterizations of the self appear to undermine the possibility for the development of rationality that suggests notions of order and permanence with respect to the self. Many of the postmodern thinkers are anti-Hegelian when they undermine rationality, but they share with Hegel an emphasis on the way that the self is socially constructed by means of interpersonal interaction and mutual recognition, even though the postmodernists often stress the uncertain and divided nature of the self. And because the rationality of the self is made problematic by the various postmodernists, the topic of rationality will need to be explored further in a future chapter.

ENDNOTES

1. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan Smith (New York: Random House, 1973), p. 385.
2. Jabès, *Book of Questions*, Vol. 1, p. 402.
3. Ibid., p. 350.
4. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague, Boston, London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1981), p. 127.
5. Lacan, *Seminar II*, p. 9.

6. Derrida, *Psyché*, p. 168.
7. Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 15.
8. Ibid., p. 40.
9. Ibid., p. 34.
10. Ibid., p. 42.
11. Ibid., p. 43.
12. Ibid., p. 48.
13. Ibid., p. 49–50.
14. Ibid., p. 51.
15. Śaṅkara, *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya*, trans. Swani Madhavananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965), 4.3.9; *Commentary on Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1.2.18.
16. Śakara, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 2.3.17.
17. Ibid., 1.3.4.
18. Ibid., 2.3.50.
19. Ibid., 1.3.7.
20. M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1932), p. 360.
21. Taylor, p. 136.
22. Eliot Deutsch, 'The Self in Advaita Vedanta', *International Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. VI (1966), p. 8.
23. Śaṅkara, *Vivekachudamani*, p. 516.
24. Taylor, p. 139.
25. Ibid., p. 140.
26. Śaṅkara, *Upadeśasāhasrī*, 1.13.15, 1.19.17.
27. Ibid., 1.19.12.
28. Taylor, p. 142.
29. Ibid., p. 147.
30. Ibid., p. 147.
31. Rāmānuja, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 2.1.9.
32. J. J. Lipner, 'The World as God's "Body": In Pursuit of Dialogue with Rāmānuja', *Religious Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1984): 150–1.
33. Lacan, *Seminar 1*, p. 170.
34. Rāmānuja, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 2.1.9.
35. Ibid., 2.1.10.
36. Rāmānuja, *Bhagavadgītā*, 13.1.
37. Ibid., 2.13–16.
38. Lacan, *Seminar 1*, p. 170.
39. Ibid., p. 147.
40. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 166.
41. Ibid., p. 165.
42. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 180.
43. Rāmānuja, *Vedārthasaṁgraha*, 2.17.

44. Lipner, 'World as God', p. 148.
45. Karl H. Potter, *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1963), p. 153.
46. Lacan, *Seminar 1*, p. 50.
47. Rāmānuja, *Bhagavadgītā*, 13.17.
48. Rāmānuja, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 1.1.1.
49. Ibid., 1.1.1.
50. Chandradhar Sharma, *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy* (London: Rider & Company, 1960), p. 334.
51. Lacan, *Seminar II*, p. 178.
52. Rāmānuja, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 2.3.20.
53. Rāmānuja, *Vedāntasāra of Rāmānuja*, ed. and trans. Narasimha Ayyangar (Madras: Adyar Library, 1953), 2.3.33.
54. Rāmānuja, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 1.1.1.
55. Rāmānuja, *Bhagavadgītā*, 2, 12; *Vedānta Sūtras*, 1.2.1.
56. Lacan, *Seminar II*, p. 44.
57. Rāmānuja, *Vedāntasāra*, 1.3.43.
58. Rāmānuja, *Bhagavadgītā*, 2.16.
59. Ibid., 7.1.6,11.
60. Ibid., 7.11.
61. Ibid., 9.4.
62. Rāmānuja, *Vedāntasāra*, 1.2.8.
63. Rāmānuja, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 2.3.45.
64. Ibid., 1.1.1.
65. Rāmānuja, *Vedārthasaṁgraha*, 3.65.
66. Rāmānuja, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 1.1.1.
67. Ibid., 1.1.1.
68. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, p. 53.
69. Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), p. 87.
70. Ibid., p. 88.
71. Ibid., p. 47.
72. Collins, p. 183.
73. Kalupahana, *History of Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 53. According to the eminent Buddhist scholar Edward Conze, the historical Buddha did not advocate that the self does not exist, but only that no one can apprehend it, in *Buddhist Thought in India* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd. 1962), p. 39.
74. Levinas, *Existence*, p. 83.
75. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, p. 43. In contrast to Levinas, Robert Nozick views the unity and identity of the self in the following way: 'The I synthesizes itself as having the identity through time of a unified whole' (p. 104) in *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

76. Ibid., pp. 54–5.
77. Levinas, *Existence*, p. 92.
78. Shwe Zan Aung and Mrs Rhys Davids, trans. *Points of Controversy: A Translation of the Kathā-Vatthu* (London: Luzac & Company, Ltd., 1969), 1.6. For a further discussion of time in early Buddhism, see André Bareau, 'The Notion of Time in Early Buddhism', *East and West* 7 (1957), pp. 353–64; David J. Kalupahana, 'The Buddhist conception of Time and Temporality', *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. XXIV, No. 2 (1974), pp. 181–92; Kenneth K. Inada, 'Time and Temporality–A Buddhist Approach', *Philosophy East and West.* Vol. XXIV, No. 2 (1974), pp. 171–9. For a wide selection of articles that includes essays on time in Mahāyāna Buddhism, see H. S. Prasad, ed. *Essays on Time in Buddhism*, Bibliotheca Indo-Buddhica, No. 78 (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publishers, 1991).
79. K. N. Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1963), p. 451.
80. Kenneth K. Inada thinks that it is a misconception to call Buddhism relativistic because their theory of causation must be viewed in its context, and it is better comprehended as an 'attempt to describe the ontological status of man regarding his present unique moment as it is related laterally and horizontally on the existential plane: laterally, in the sense of each moment's concrete relationship to every element at play and horizontally, in the sense of each moment coming into being and going out of being' in 'Some Basic Misconceptions of Buddhism', *International Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. IX, No. 1 (March 1969), p. 116.
81. Levinas, *Existence*, p. 28.
82. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, p. 36.
83. Ibid., p. 37.
84. Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, p. 114. Paul Riceour criticizes Levinas for basing his philosophy 'on the initiative of the other in the intersubjective relation. In reality, this initiative establishes no relation at all, to the extent that the other represents absolute exteriority with respect to an ego defined by the condition of separation' (p. 188) in *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
85. I. B. Horner, trans. *Milinda's Questions*, 2 vols (London: Luzac and Company, Ltd., 1969), 2.25.
86. *The Middle Length Sayings*, 1.28. The term *khandha* means the trunk of a tree or the body of an elephant, according to T. W. Rhys Davids and William Stede eds. *The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary* (London: Luzac and Company, Ltd., 1966), pp. 232–3.
87. In the second aggregate are included all sensations experienced through contact of the physical and mental organs with the external world which are: the contact of the eye with visible forms; ear with sounds; nose with odours; tongue with taste; body with tangible objects;

and the mind with thoughts. The third aggregate or the six kinds of perceptions are produced through the contact of our six internal faculties with the corresponding six external objects of the world. The fourth aggregate includes such volitional activities as will (*chanda*) concentration (*samādhi*), wisdom (*paññā*), desire (*rāga*), hate (*patigha*), ignorance (*avijja*), and conceit (*māma*), which all produce karmic effects. In short, there are 52 such mental activities that constitute this aggregate. The basis of the final aggregate or consciousness is the six faculties (eye, ear, nose, tongue body, and mind). Consciousness is a reaction to one of the six faculties and their objects: visible form; sound; odour; taste; tangible things; or ideas.

88. *Middle Length Sayings*, 1.435.

89. Matthews, p. 29. Winston L. King, *In the Hope of Nibbana: An Essay on Theravada Buddhist Ethics* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1964), p. 8.

90. *Book of the Kindred Sayings*, 1.15. Robert Nozick is critical of the Buddhist position at this point: 'Despite claims, meditative practice has not shown or discovered that the self is nonexistent. Yet still such disciplined practice might lead to a reorganization of the self, or to greater control in wielding the self's structure' (p. 144) in *The Examined Life: Philosophical Meditations* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989).

91. *Middle Length Sayings*, 1.256.

92. Kalupahana, *History of Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 72.

93. Buddhaghosa, 9.38, 18.28.

94. *Book of the Kindred Sayings*, 1.135.

95. Collins, p. 190.

96. *Dhammapada*, p. 285.

97. Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Phaenomenological 100 (Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), p. 97.

98. Ibid., p. 97.

99. Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, p. 114. Ricoeur admits a debt to Levinas and agrees with him that the self is summoned to responsibility by the other, p. 189. Although he does not necessarily disagree with Levinas and Ricoeur, Nozick stresses reflexive caring, which is a special caring of the self for itself in *Philosophical Explanations*, p. 108.

100. Ibid., p. 117.

101. Ibid., p. 127.

102. Buddhaghosa, 9.106.

103. *Dialogues of the Buddha*, II.186, III.49. Justin Hartley Moore, trans. *Sayings of Buddha: The Iti-Vuttaka* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1908; Reprint New York: AMS Press Inc., 1965), p. 22. See also Harvey B. Aronson, *Love and Sympathy in Theravāda Buddhism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986).

104. *Dialogues of the Buddha*, 1.251; *Book of the Gradual Sayings*, 1.196; *Book of the Kindred Sayings*, 5.118.

105. *Middle Length Sayings*, i.79, 364, 3.219; *Book of the Gradual Sayings*, 1.42; *The Book of the Discipline* (*Vinaya-Pitaka*), 6 vols, trans. I. B. Horner (London: Luzac and Company, 1963–70), III.4.

106. Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, p. 127.

107. Conze, *Buddhist Thought*, p. 104.

108. Madhva, *The Bhagavad-Gita According to Sri Madhwacharya's Bhashyas*, trans. S. Subba Rau (Madras: Minera Press, 1906), 2.18.

109. B. N. K. Sharma, *Philosophy of Śrī Madhvācārya* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), pp. 253–5.

110. Abhinavagupta, *Gītārthasaṅgraha*, trans. Arvind Sharma (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1983), 15.15.

111. Ibid., 2.16.

112. Ibid., 2.19.

113. Abhinavagupta, *Le Paramārthasāra*, trans. Liliane Silburn (Paris: E. de Boccard, Editeur, 1957), p. 69.

114. Derrida, *Psyché*, p. 168.

115. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 230.

116. Madhva, *The Vedānta Sūtras with the Commentary of Śri Madhvacharya*, trans. S. Subba Rau (Madras: Minera Press, 1904), 1.2.8, 3.2.18, 2.1.14.

117. Ibid., 2.3.41–2.

118. Abhinavagupta, *Paramārthasāra*, p. 25.

119. Julia Kristeva, *Polylogue* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977), pp. 78, 96. In sharp contrast to Kristeva's position, Nozick is more certain about the wholeness of the self: '...selves are essentially selves, that anything which is a self could not have existed yet been otherwise. I am an I—necessarily I am an I' (p. 79) in *Philosophical Explanations*.

120. Kristeva, *Revolution*, pp. 46–7.

121. Kristeva, *Desire*, pp. 74.

122. Madhva, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 2.3.24.

123. Ibid., 2.3.33.

124. Ibid., 3.2.18.

125. Madhva, *Bhagavad-Gita*, 5.14.

126. Abhinavagupta, *Paramārthasāra*, pp. 16–17.

127. Abhinavagupta, *Tantrāloka*, 6.60.

128. Ibid., 1.56.

129. Derrida, *Psyché*, p. 560. My translation of this passage.

130. Derrida, 'Post-Scriptum: Aporias, Ways and Voices', trans. John P. Leavey, Jr in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 303.

131. Abhinavagupta, *Tantrāloka*, 1.62.

132. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 147. Hilary Putnam, a representative of a realist philosophical position, is critical of Derrida and other deconstructionists who follow him for their attack on the so-called metaphysics of presence: 'Deconstructionists are right in claiming that a certain philosophical tradition is bankrupt; but to identify that metaphysical tradition with our lives and our language is to give metaphysics an altogether exaggerated importance' (p. 124) in *Renewing Philosophy* (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1933).

133. Ibid., p. 102.

134. Ibid., p. 102. With respect to metaphysical issues, some critics think that Derrida is an extremist, but Putnam does not share such an opinion, although he worries: 'But the philosophical irresponsibility of one decade can become the real-world political tragedy of few decades later. And deconstruction without reconstruction is irresponsibility' (p. 133).

135. Madhva, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 2.3.13, 3.2.27.

136. Abhinavagupta, *Paramārthasāra*, pp. 9, 96.

137. Kristeva, *Polylogue*, p. 71.

138. Ibid., p. 97.

139. Kristeva, *Revolution*, p. 28. *Chora* is a term that Kristeva borrows from Plato's *Timaeus* to denote an essentially mobile and provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral states.

140. Ibid., p. 26.

141. Ibid., p. 26.

142. Kristeva, *Polylogue*, p. 79.

143. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Meaning of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 30. According to Nozick, identity of the self is always compromised by spatial and temporal distances that necessarily involve some dissimilarity (p. 46) in *Philosophical Explanations*. Ricoeur views the identity of the self, which is formed by the two poles of *idem* and *ipse* that accord with one another, in terms of the narrative. Thus a person shares the dynamic identity peculiar to the story that is recounted (pp. 147–8).

144. Radhakrishnan, 'Fragments', p. 30. Nozick not only agrees with Radhakrishnan about the importance of the body, but he also goes beyond the Indian philosopher's position by stating: '... bodily continuity can be an important component of identity, even (in some cases) its sole determinant' (p. 35) in *Philosophical Explanations*. Along similar lines of argument, Ricoeur thinks that each person is his/her own body, which serves as the mediator between the self and the external world (p. 322).

145. C. Taylor, p. 36.

146. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 26.

147. C. Taylor, p. 47. Ricoeur agrees with Taylor about the importance of narrative in determining the identity of the self within the context of a dialectic of selfhood and sameness (p. 140). Nozick differs from Ricoeur and Taylor by stressing the ability of the self to synthesize itself within the present moment and the past (p. 91) in *Philosophical Explanations*.

148. Radhakrishnan, *Idealist View of Life*, pp. 103–4. The self-recognition of Radhakrishnan is shared to an extent by Nozick when the latter stresses the reflexive self-consciousness that constitutes and organizes the self, but this is something that the self possesses from the beginning of its existence. In other words, the self, for Nozick, is aware of the contents of consciousness and also reflexively aware of it as being aware of these other contents of consciousness and of itself (pp. 144–5) in *The Examined Life*.

149. Ibid., p. 111.

150. C. Taylor, p. 111.

151. Radhakrishnan, *Idealist View of Life*, p. 106.

152. Ibid., p. 465.

153. Radhakrishnan, *Idealist View of Life*, p. 103.

154. C. Taylor, p. 34. Nozick agrees with Taylor on this point: 'What is special about people, about selves, is that what constitutes their identity through time is partially determined by their own conception which may vary, perhaps appropriately does vary, from person to person' (p. 69) in *Philosophical Explanations*.

155. Ibid., p. 28.

156. Radhakrishnan, *Idealist View of Life*, pp. 143, 157.

157. Radhakrishnan, 'Fragments', p. 60.

158. Mohanty, p. 197. Martin Buber, the Jewish philosopher and religious scholar, attempts in his work to determine the uniqueness of the self. He gives a two-fold answer: the self in relation to others and the self in relation to God. The self, for Buber, is also historical, social, and interpersonal by nature. An individual can only become a person in genuine personal relation to other selves. And relationship with others is possible only in terms of a real relationship to God. This means that a foundational relationship must necessarily be triadic—self, God, and other. According to Buber, it is this triadic relationship, which is historically and socially grounded, that makes the concept of the self personal in his works entitled *I-Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith, Second Edition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958) and *Between Man and Man*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Macmillan, 1948).



Difference and Identity

A fundamental gap between postmodern philosophy and Indian thought is the former's emphasis on difference or heterogeneity, whereas there is a tendency in the latter to stress unity or what some postmodernist would call sameness, although we will find that there are also exceptions in Indian thought. This emphasis by postmodern philosophy is grounded in its anti-metaphysical stance. Derrida makes this perfectly clear: 'There is no such thing a "metaphysical-concept". There is no such thing as a "metaphysical-name". The "metaphysical" is a certain determination or direction taken by a sequence or "chain".'[1] Wanting to detach his own work from the concept of metaphysics, Derrida is not as much concerned with another philosopher's attachment to, borrowing from, or complicity with it, but he is rather concerned with the necessity of being attached to any form of metaphysics.[2] Thus Derrida sees himself as following in the philosophical path of Martin Heidegger and his deconstruction of metaphysics.

In a lecture delivered in 1957 in Halle entitled 'Identity and Difference', Heidegger tells us that he wants to think of 'difference as difference.' More specifically, he wants to think the unthought difference between Being and beings, which involves thinking of the veiling or concealment of difference, concealment that has withdrawn from the beginning.[3] Yet we encounter

difference all the time, but never stop to specifically think about it. What we find is that Being and beings are already there in their difference, and when we encounter Being or beings we are dealing in each instance with a difference.[4] When we think the difference that is unthought, we are involved in metaphysics which is onto-theology because it is both ontology and theology in unity. When the Being of beings becomes present as the Being of beings, as the difference, it serves as the ground of beings, and beings account for Being.[5]

Grounded in an anti-metaphysical stance, the stressing of the importance of difference in postmodern philosophy takes a variety of forms. Although Lyotard thinks that what he calls the differend is an unstable state that includes silence, he is hopeful and thinks that it marks a new beginning: 'To give the differend its due is to institute new addresses, new addressors, new significations, and new referents in order for the wrong to find an expression and for the plaintiff to cease being a victim.'[6] What makes the differends possible for Lyotard is *Eregnis*, a term used by Heidegger to mean the event of the arising of Being and the issuing forth of the ontological difference.[7] The schizoanalysis advocated by Deleuze and Guattari is another example of the postmodern stress on difference.

After giving up his earlier method of archaelogy, Foucault adopted from Nietzsche the method of genealogy, which is a further example of a heterological approach by a postmodernist. Building on the descriptive role of the archaeologist, the genealogist concentrates on the interrelations of power, knowledge, and the human body. Since genealogy attempts to retrieve what has been unsaid within the course of history, it must use a wide variety of different evidence to find the gaps of history, the locale of the unsaid. The genealogist does not stand outside of history when he seeks to find the gaps, but he/she rather stands within the web of power relations in the present moment, does not hide behind a false facade of objectivity, and openly acknowledges that all knowledge is relative.[8] Even though it does not possess constants, the heterological method of genealogy enables history to become effective because it is separated from metaphysics and acknowledges no absolutes.[9] In the final analysis, genealogy discloses differences, discontinuities, and divisions within history and culture. This heterological

method does even more by serving as a stimulus and representing 'a wound in rationalism.'[10] This suggests that rationality is not only flawed from its inception, but Foucault uses, moreover, a method that is intended to undermine rationality.

This emphasis on gaps, pauses, discontinuity, and difference is also evident in the work of Derrida who writes philosophical works in the spirit of play. When he writes, Derrida imagines himself metaphorically disseminating words, which is akin to a scattering of seeds that can neither be recovered nor inseminate anything. If writing philosophy is like disseminating seeds, it is obviously a risky endeavour, but Derrida wants to take this risk even if he must risk meaning literally nothing. Why would anyone want to take such a chance? To risk meaning nothing is to enter into play, which involves entering into the play of différance. In this spirit, we will compare the philosophical position of Derrida with selected Indian philosophers on the nature of difference and unity. More precisely, we will compare the positions of Derrida on his special meaning of difference with the following Indian philosophers: Śaṅkara; Rāmānuja; Abhinavagupta; and Madhva. We will then do a comparative analysis of identity by comparing Derrida and Śaṅkara, Mark C. Taylor with Rāmānuja, Emmanuel Levinas with Abhinavagupta, Derrida with Madhva, and Jean-Luc Marion with Radhakrishnan. By following this pattern, we will avoid repetition and be able to introduce some other postmodern thinkers into the discussion.

DIFFÉRANCE AND DIFFERENCE

Derrida stresses difference in this philosophy in a very special sense. He starts by emphasizing the ambiguity of the verb 'to differ' which in some instances signifies non-identity, but in other cases refers to the sameness of things. Moreover, it can indicate a present distinction or a delay, an interval of space and time.[11] Since Derrida wants to capture the sense of 'differing' as spacing and temporalizing and to indicate the sameness that is non-identical, he uses the term différance to indicate a necessarily finite movement that precedes and structures all opposition. The *ance* ending of différance, marked by a silent *a*, suggests that it is not simply a word or a concept; it is neither existence nor essence, and it is neither active nor passive because the perceiving subject is similarly constituted.[12] Différance, a necessarily finite movement, is what precedes and structures all opposition. In other words, it originates before all differences, and represents the play of differences. It is impossible for it to be exposed because it cannot reveal itself in the present moment and never produces presence itself, whose structure is constituted by difference and deferment.[13]

In contrast to the finite movement evident in Derrida's thought, Śaṅkara makes use of the mental process of sublation (*bādha*) where an object or content of consciousness is cancelled because it is contradicted by a new experience. Moving from an initial judgment about an object or content of consciousness to a radically conflicting judgment that renders the first judgment false, a thinker accepts the new judgment as valid because one's previous erroneous belief is rectified. Being able to sublate anything means that a given entity of consciousness possesses a lower degree of reality.[14] If reality is that which cannot be sublated by any other experience, the realization of Brahman, and non-dual state of being, is the only thing that cannot be contradicted by any other experience and is thus the ultimate reality.[15] For Derrida, it would be impossible to sublate anything in one's consciousness because différance is also the structure of the mind or psyche. Moreover, différance is ontically neutral because it does not accept or reject the possibility of existence or non-existence of any finite or infinite entity. Although there is nothing equivalent to Derrida's notion of différance in Indian philosophy, we can approximate a dialogue with the postmodernist and various Indian philosophers by discussing how the latter deal with the problem of difference in their thought.

According to Śaṅkara, difference owes its existence to limiting adjuncts that are falsely constructed on the non-dual Ātman.[16] Śaṅkara draws attention to three kinds of distinctions or differences. These are the following distinctions: between one class of thing and another (*vijātīya*); between members of the same class (*sajātīya*); and within a member of a class (*svagata*).[17] This means that trees are, for example, distinct from cars, a pine tree is distinct from a maple tree, and Brahman is free

from all distinctions. Śaṅkara explains his distinctions further by using the metaphor of the foam, waves, and bubbles that represent modifications of the sea. But these various modifications are not mutually inclusive because they are not other than the sea. Likewise, Śaṅkara draws the inference that worldly phenomena, which exhibit differences, divisions, and distinctions, are not mutually inclusive, and they are not other than Brahman. Therefore, phenomenal entities are not in themselves different and distinctions made on only apparent differences are not objectively real. Just like the distinction drawn from the metaphor of the sea, distinctions or differences are mental constructs, relation notions, and lacking any intrinsic nature.[18] By means of perceiving differences, we fall into a condition of delusion. When we see differences between inanimate things and between animate beings these erroneous perceptions give rise to illusion, and when we win release from the perception of difference, all illusions disappear.[19] If difference and the distinctive objects with it characterize the entire world, the world is thus self-discrepant.[20] From an epistemological point of view, any knowledge of difference possessed by an individual is false knowledge.[21] If this is the case, where can one turn for immediate assistance? Śaṅkara answers that the Vedic texts, revealed scripture (śruti), provides certain help because their sole purpose is to teach non-difference, and by gaining knowledge of the identity between Brahman and Ātman, one attains one's true goal.[22] By means of an intuitive insight, we can recognize that difference is a mere appearance.

This does not mean for Śaṅkara that there is no difference whatsoever in the world. The individual ego, desire, change, and inanimate objects are all objects of perception that are different from each other. Since they are all objects of perception, they cannot perceive one another, but they are perceived by the Ātman, which is different from them.[23] If two persons are competing for a job, an employer must consider, for instance, their differences when deciding which one to hire for the position. Presumably, the person with the most advantageous differences for the position will obtain a job offer from the employer. Assuming that one person possesses better communication skills than the other person, the person with the better skills receives an offer of employment because the employer perceived something that could help him/her in the one person and not in the other, based on differences between the two candidates. Therefore, a person receives the job due to a perceived difference. A person cannot, however, attain Ātman in the same way because it is by nature self-attained.[24] This implies that there is a mutual dependence between difference and different entities because the notion of difference presupposes a prior knowledge to two distinct objects. Thus the notion of difference is included already in a person's knowledge and ability to draw distinctions. This suggests also that the attainment of Ātman does not depend upon anything else, whereas the attainment of the job depended on seeing a difference. Moreover, Śaṅkara insists that any difference perceived between the Ātman and Brahman is falsely assumed on the basis of difference, a false form of knowledge. Even though the Ātman and Brahman are two different terms, they are ultimately identical with each other. How can this be the case? Difference exists within the domain of lower knowledge, (apara vidyā), whereas higher knowledge (para vidyā) enables one to perceive identity and that difference is a mere product of thought that possesses no reality. Other Indian philosophers approach the notion of difference from contrary philosophical positions to that of Śaṅkara.

From the epistemological perspective of Rāmānuja, perception and inference are modes of knowledge that are primarily concerned with difference. If we focus on what he writes about perception, we discover that it cannot be devoid of difference, whether referring to determinate or non-determinate perception.[25] Unlike Derrida, Rāmānuja thinks that difference presupposes the essential nature of a thing, although Derrida cannot be confined to affirming either the priority or anterior nature of différance because it is more akin to a 'quasi-transcendental anteriority, not a supereminent, transcendent ulteriority.'[26] If one perceives a difference in an object based on one's powers of perception, renders a judgment on what one perceives, and bases a proposition on this, such perception and judgment based on difference are not to be trusted because they are grounded on error, according to Rāmānuja.[27] If based on one's perception, one makes a judgment that difference and non-difference exist in the same object, such a conclusion would be

incorrect because these opposites cannot co-exist in the same object.[28] If one perceives a house and an automobile, one will notice that they possess different forms, which indicates that a single person can perceive difference not just in their forms but also in their utility. One can live, for instance, in a house and fill it with furniture and other items to enable one to be comfortable, whereas an automobile can transport one to a destination, a practical activity that a house is unable to perform. Since one can live in a house and travel in an automobile, these distinct uses of things possessing diverse forms proves for Rāmānuja that a person perceives difference, although Śaṅkara would assert that perception can only inform us that a thing exists.

From Derrida's perspective, the perception of difference between objects is not so simple because différance represents a pure trace.[29] Before one can think of the object, one must think the trace: 'The field of the entity, before being determined as the field of presence, is structured according to the diverse possibilities—genetic and structural—of the trace.'[30] Since our perception is governed by repression and censorship, it is impossible for there to be a pure perception. Before an object becomes present to perception, Derrida claims that différance, in the mode of a trace, is already there and determines the object. This does not mean that the object owes its existence to the trace because the trace does not represent the disappearance of the origin, but rather the origin was never constituted in the first place. Thus the trace is the 'origin of the origin.'[31] And since the trace is both derivative of presence and opposed to an instant of full presence, this renders pure perception impossible.

Contrary to Rāmānuja, Derrida thinks that it is not perception that produces differences between objects, but it is rather the movement of play that produces differences.[32] Derrida explains, '*Différance* is the systematic play of differences, of the traces of differences, of the *spacing* by means of which elements are related to each other.'[33] Play, an alternation of presence and absence, also disrupts presence, a signifying and substitutive reference inscribed within a complex system of difference.[34] Since play is an important characteristic of différance, it is apparent that it is not a static, ahistoric structure.

From another epistemological perspective, Rāmānuja agrees with Śaṅkara that whatever can be sublated is not real. Objects of cognition that are different possess a non-continuous existence and are unreal, whereas Brahman, pure being and intelligence, cannot be sublated and persists in its continuous existence. This implies that everything other than Brahman is unreal.[35] Since Brahman is modified by everything because everything constitutes its body, this establishes non-difference. And if Brahman is modified by both a variety of spiritual and non-spiritual entities, this constitutes both difference and non-difference within Brahman.[36] From Derrida's perspective, Rāmānuja seems to suggest that Brahman makes it possible for non-difference and difference to be present. In contrast to Rāmānuja, the notion of différance in Derrida's philosophy does not exist and cannot become present: 'It belongs to no category of being, present or absent.'[37] Thus it can neither represent existence or essence. Since différance never becomes a present being or a thing, it is not truly real, which makes it equivalent in Derrida's philosophy to ashes and ghosts that waver between being and non-being. The strong disagreements between these two philosophers are also evident when Derrida is compared to Abhinavagupta.

The basic presupposition of Abhinavagupta is that there is a single reality, which is identified with the pure consciousness (saṃvid) of Śiva that manifests both unity and difference. The difference between things is merely an external distinction made within the limitation imposed upon us by the illusory (māyā) quality of the world in which we are only able to make relative distinctions.[38] Because all things are manifestations of the pure consciousness of Śiva, all things are also constituted by it. This means that unity, an absence of difference and not a negation of distinction, is an insight into the true nature of difference, that is, different things are identical.

If Śiva is the name for the unity of difference and non-difference, Derrida responds that the silent *a* of the term différance signifies a sameness that is not identical. The silent letter cannot be heard, remains a secret, and is analogous to a tomb.[39] And yet it is still active and productive because it is a generative movement in the play of differences.[40] Derrida's silent *a* refers to differing as both spacing and temporalizing

and 'as the movement that structures every dissociation.'[41] Différance is not a pure secret because such a secret cannot appear and possesses no phenomenality.[42] By declaring that one possesses a secret, the secret of the secret is divulged and spilled in advance, a process of negation that is de-negated. At the precise moment that you claim to have a secret, it becomes divided against itself. The secret for Derrida is that there is no secret, no thing-in-itself, no transcendental signified, no hyper-essential intuition to which a person holding the secret can get extratextual access.[43]

Abhinavagupta finds several ways to refer to difference. When pure consciousness (saṃvid) is obscured, this occurrence gives rise to difference.[44] Difference may be created by Śiva himself by obscuring his own pure consciousness in order to motivate others to understand his nature.[45] The human faculties of perception and remembrance are responsible for the difference in manifestation[46] Due to the diversity of objects, there is difference in temporal and spatial relations.[47] Although there is a great diversity of objects within space and time, there is also a unity among the multitude of objects because they are grounded on one subject, a single deity, and one pure consciousness.[48] If Abhinavagupta intends to suggest that without difference his God would be something static, Derrida gives him a sympathetic hearing, otherwise one would be left with a static conception of a deity. The participation of objects in a single reality that transcends them enables objects to appear in the world, which points to the role of illumination (prakāśa) in pure consciousness. Abhinavagupta wants to defend the human experience of objectivity and show that individual acts of cognition have a unity: 'He wants to show that the unity of consciousness and the diversity of objects connected to it are not only compatible, but mutually necessary, while a dualism that denies the connection between objects and consciousness would actually entail an unacceptable and sterile, non-dualism of undifferentiated consciousness.'[49] Although there is no unity of consciousness for Derrida, he does refer to unconscious traces that produce differences, which is like placing differences on reserve.[50] Derrida wants to stress that différance is a process without a subject. It occurs on a level below consciousness—and even unconsciousness—at a point where intentionality does not come into play.

With respect to the notion of difference, an Indian philosopher more akin to the emphasis of Derrida is the thirteenth century figure named Madhva, who argues that difference constitutes the essential essence of things and reality itself and is not a mere attribute of them,[51] even though Derrida would disagree that difference represents the essence of things. Since human beings see different things all around them for Madhva, it is impossible to deny the existence of difference. When we perceive an object we see its difference because difference does not have an independent existence apart from an object, although this does not mean that difference is identical with a particular object.[52] Difference is not a thing-in-itself, not a relation, not a mere metaphysical abstraction, but it is what makes a thing distinct from other objects. It is identified with its support: it is *vastu-svarūpa*, or the same essence of a thing.[53] Taking into consideration Madhva's cultural heritage, it cannot also be asserted that difference is due to the process of karma,[54] even though some thinkers like the Buddhist philosopher, Buddhaghosa trace the nature of difference to the process of karma.[55] Derrida agrees with Madhva that difference is not a metaphysical abstraction. But Derrida goes further by asserting that his notion of différance represents the origin of all differences.[56] The results of différance are produced below the conscious and unconscious levels. Madhva thinks that difference is perceived by the witness consciousness, which he identifies with the Ātman, whereas Rāmānuja thinks that difference is given in the act of perception itself.[57] From Derrida's perspective, Madhva implies that the witness consciousness transforms the things perceived into a unity. When one perceives a thing, neither an objective nor subjective entity for Derrida, it always remains entirely other, singular, and different.[58] What is really intriguing for Derrida occurs before the appearance of a thing.

Since within the substance of everything there resides a latent and hidden difference for Madhva, this makes it impossible for Śaṅkara's notion of sublation to operate because it can only continually contradict itself because the process of sublating cognition will necessarily involve difference. The omnipresence of difference makes it impossible to transcend it by means of sublating it. Basing his position on revealed literature (śruti),

Madhva claims that difference persists after liberation, and does not assume a lower degree of reality like something that has been sublated.[59] And if Śaṅkara tries to deny its existence, he will be caught in a self-contradiction. Since difference forms the basis of every negation, Madhva also denies that difference represents a mutual negation, and he redefines it to be a constitutive feature (*svarūpaviśeṣa*) of objects and not in any sense a form of negation, whereas Derrida thinks more radically that différance is the ground of all difference in both spatial and temporal senses.

Madhva recognizes three major types of difference: a distinction of one thing from others of its own kind (sajātiya); difference from those of another kind (vijātiya); internal distinction within an organic whole (svagata). This means that a thing of a given class is still different from every member of the same class, a single part of one class is different than the whole of a class, and all members of one class are to be distinguished from every member of every other class.[60] The ramifications for Madhva's philosophical theology are the following: there is a distinction between the Ātman and Brahman; a difference between unconscious things and Brahman; a difference between all Ātmans; a distinction between all Ātmans and all that is unconscious; a difference between all unconscious entities from every other unconscious entity. These distinctions represent the five differences in the universe.[61] From Derrida's perspective, Madhva seems to suggest that there is a realm of difference, whereas Derrida claims that différance subverts every realm.[62] The philosophical positions of Derrida and Madhva suggest an absolute heterogeneity. But whereas the heterogeneity of Madhva's philosophy gives one assurances, the heterogeneity of Derrida is intended to unsettle and disrupt us.

BRAHMAN AND IDENTITY

While Derrida is suspicious about all existence claims and possesses no ontological commitments, a much less skeptical Saṅkara defines Brahman positively as sat-cit-ānanda (being, consciousness and bliss). In contrast to the world, Brahman alone, which encompasses both being (*sat*) and non-being (*asat*), is a real existing being that did not originate from anything else. As consciousness (*cit*), Brahman is the ground of all distinctions and the core of being, and makes distinctions and beings possible, whereas bliss (ānanda) suggests the unconditional value of Brahman.[63] If the positive sat-cit-ānanda definition of Brahman represents its essence, Derrida's understanding of différance is much different because it is without essence, which also implies that it cannot be equated with being, consciousness, bliss, truth, or reality.[64] Moreover, Derrida thinks that ontology conceals rather than reveals anything.[65]

Śaṅkara gives the appearance of being closer to Derrida's position when he defines *Nirguṇa* Brahman or Brahman without qualities as free from limiting adjuncts and thus the highest aspect, in a negative way by stating that it is *neti, neti* (not this, not that), which asserts that it is indefinable, indescribable, lacking qualities, non-relational, and impersonal.[66] Nirguṇa Brahman, an object of vidyā (knowledge), stands in sharp contrast to *Saguṇa* Brahman, which possesses qualities and attributes and is an object of avidyā (ignorance). This latter feature of Brahman is personal and describable unlike the Nirguṇa aspect, which both form two aspects of the single absolute. Positive and negative definitions of reality, two aspects of the absolute, and the corresponding knowledge or ignorance are distinctions that Derrida cannot accept.

For Derrida, différance is not a deity—hidden or revealed—and makes no appearance because it is not a phenomenal entity. Caputo expresses this point lucidly: '*Différance* is not the trace left behind by the *deus absconditus* but the coded tracing within which are generated all names and concepts, all the relatively stable nominal unites, including the name of the unknown God, or G-d, or *Gottheit*, including even itself, the name *différance*.'[67] It does, however, make possible what is present. Although for Śaṅkara nothing precedes Brahman or pure Being, *différance* is older than Being, more ancient than any name and yet is not itself a name for Derrida. If différance is nameless, this does not suggest that it is an unnamable being. It rather implies that it points in the direction of the differential matrix that generates names and concepts. Moreover, différance does not affirm an ultimate entity or state nor does it establish the non-existence of a super-ontic entity.

From Derrida's perspective, différance is a condition that makes it possible for Brahman to exist, since it is more ancient than any name or Being. There is no entity that is wholly the product of ignorance and none that is wholly the result of knowledge. Furthermore, the two aspects of Brahman, forming a single reality, makes no sense from Derrida's viewpoint because différance exists within the structure of each aspect. Śaṅkara asserts, for instance, that the distinction between the individual self (jīva) and Brahman is not in reality a fact.[68] The difference between them is merely due to ignorance. If Brahman is the ultimate state of unity beyond the binding effect of karma and the ever revolving flux of time for Śaṅkara, this is unacceptable to Derrida because his use of irony and his articulation of both pro and anti aspects of every philosophical stance do not allow him to adopt any thesis nor argue any philosophical position for any substantial period. Due to the workings of negation in his method, Derrida must reject the unity of Śaṅkara's position because no unity exists due to the impossibility of finding a unifying factor. Within the context of Derrida's notion of différance, the Advaita Vedānta philosophy of Śaṅkara is merely a prefatory exercise; it can never become final in any sense because we can never arrive at the truth from Derrida's perspective.

THE LIVING GOD AND THE DEATH OF GOD

Unlike the Advaita Vedānta position of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja grasps the nature of the highest reality as a personal deity that he identifies with Viṣṇu, the all-pervading deity of many incarnations, that he calls Nārāyaṇa, a proper name of God, Bhagavān (Lord), or Puruṣottama (the Highest Person). This last appellation is to be understood as both a divine name and a metaphysical definition of God.[69] God is defined not only as the ultimate reality, but He is also the highest self and supreme (*para*). The implications of this last term can be explained as follows; 'Para here means "higher than", not "other than"; utterly surpassing them in excellence that constitutes His "otherness" from finite beings. At the same time He is also "under" and encompassing "all other entities".'[70] In fact, God is the ground of all finite being because He is Being (sat) itself. This implies

that all finite beings are completely dependent on God for their essential nature, continued existence, and activity. Thus God is the inner controller (*niyantā*) of all beings and the universe.[71] Referring to God as niyantā expresses His personal and dynamic relation to the universe.[72]

Unlike the philosophical theology of Rāmānuja, Mark C. Taylor intends to deconstruct western theology and addresses his work to a marginal audience. Since Taylor's work is addressed to marginal people, his work fits properly within the context of comparative philosophy because it is an activity that takes place on the margins of eastern and western cultures. Due to the fact that Taylor relies so heavily on Derrida to the extent that one wonders about the authorship of his book *Erring*, we have good reason to assume that Taylor represents the theological voice of Derrida, or how someone would write theology based on the philosophy of the French thinker and deconstructionist. Taylor envisions himself as a liminal being addressing a marginal audience with an ideally suited method, which is deconstruction: 'Its liminality marks an unstable border along which marginal thinkers wander.'[73] The style of deconstructive writing tends to be paradoxical, excentric errant, duplicitous, playful, and always remains transitional. The language that it uses possesses no final meaning.[74] It is the hermeneutic of the death of God. After deconstructing western theology, Taylor turns to a theology that emerges out of the deconstruction of theology. Thus his second task is 'to elaborate the implications of insights that have already begun to emerge.'[75]

If the modern version of the death of God is expressed in humanistic atheism, Taylor argues that it did not go far enough because: 'The humanistic atheist fails to realize that the death of God is at the same time the death of the self.'[76] In other words, if God is dead, the self must also be dead because the self needs something with which to relate in order to find its identity and meaning. In Taylor's radical sense of the death of God, death becomes the absolute master because God is experienced as death itself, whereas Rāmānuja experiences God as life.[77] Again, the humanistic atheists did not go far enough for Taylor because their effort is more akin to denying death and an embrace of narcissism, which is directly connected to the murder of God and self-deification.

Conceiving of God as the material and efficient cause of the universe, Rāmānuja accepts the doctrine of *satkāryavāda* which views the transformation (parināma) of a causal substance into a new form but not into a new and different substance: 'So God is effect when both cit and acit substances, which constitute his body, are in their gross, evolved condition, and He is cause, when both are in their subtle, unevolved condition. This means that the effect is identical with the cause and that therefore the effect can be known if the cause is known.'[78] Rejecting the view on causality of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophical school and following the Sāṁkhya position, Rāmānuja argues that God is the material cause because He differentiates Himself into self and body, and He is the efficient cause because He intelligently directs each new creation. Thus it is incorrect to view God as cause and the world as an effect.

In sharp contrast to the position of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja makes no distinction between nirguṇa (without qualities) and saguṇa (with qualities) Brahman because he wants to emphasize the personal nature of God.[79] The intimate personal nature of God is evident by the importance attached to His acting as a merciful protector and saviour. God not only controls the working of the law of karma, but actively intervenes in the world and the lives of human beings. In contrast, Taylor thinks that the personal God of Christianity is a victim of murder. This act of murder can be construed as an act of self-deification: 'Self-deification is, of course, the extreme expression of narcissism. This narcissism is finally nihilistic.'[80] Quoting from Nietzsche's *Will To Power*, Taylor grasps the result of the death of God as the 'highest values devalue themselves.' The death of God entails important consequences: 'The death of God, the disappearance of the father, is the birth of the Son, the appearance of the Word—the appearance of language as sovereign.'[81] With the death of God, the transcendent deity disappears, and the divine becomes embodied as the word, a radical incarnational christology in which incarnation becomes inscription.[82]

God's activity is conceived by Rāmānuja as a divine sport or play (*līlā*), which means that God acts for His own sake (*sva-artha*) and for the sake of others (*para-artha*). The creation of the universe, for instance, is a manifestation of God's spontaneous self-expression, which is an end in itself.[83] In other words, there is nothing to be gained by His activity, since sport is itself the divine purpose. Play is for God's sake in the sense that it serves to give God an enjoyable experience (bhoga). God's creativity is also for the sake of others by means of providing finite beings an opportunity to use what is given to attain release.[84] God acts especially for the well-being of His creatures in the form of His various *avatāras* (incarnations), although ultimately the creative activity of God is without purpose.[85]

The concept of play also has an important role in Taylor's work because the death of God frees an aberrant form of play, an unending game without goals, rewards, or results. This is the free, useless, non-serious, purposeless, meaningless play of erring in which the game is irregular and the players are unlawful because it does not conform to rules of common sense or logic.[86] Taylor calls this transgressive type of game carnivalesque because it upsets traditional hierarchies by inverting established values and meanings: 'When it becomes radical, inversion is transformed into a perversion that is subversive.'[87] This perverse and subversive type of play is far removed from the kind of activity that is envisioned by Rāmānuja. When traditional values are overturned and evil prevails for Rāmānuja, God becomes incarnate to re-establish order and punish the wicked, which is only possible for a living God. Of course, if God is dead, there is no standard or ground of cultural values from the perspective of Rāmānuja.

According to Rāmānuja, the Ātman, prakṛti (matter, body), and God form a unity from one perspective. The Ātman and the body are interdependent in the sense that the body is a mode of the Ātman, and it sustains the Ātman and provides it with the means for its release.[88] The Ātman is the ground of the body in the sense that it animates, guides, and supports the body. Since the body is a mode of the Ātman, they both constitute the body of God. Thus the body and Ātman are modes of God who animates and supports them: 'In other words, the individual soul is itself ensouled by Brahman, for the soul is a modification of Brahman because it constitutes His body...'[89] Contrary to Śaṅkara's position, the logical result of Rāmānuja's position is that the world is real because the entire universe is ensouled by Brahman. And since the selves and the material world

constitute the body of Brahman, they possess an inherent telos that drives them toward the realization of Brahman.[90]

Taylor agrees with Rāmānuja that God and the world cannot exist apart from one another, but the former does not agree with the ontological rationale of the latter because God becomes incarnate for Taylor to reconcile the finite with the infinite. But this process of reconciliation involves consequences with which Rāmānuja cannot agree. Taylor writes, 'The absolutizing of relativity is at the same time the relativizing of absoluteness.'[91] It is beyond the comprehension of Rāmānuja as to how one could relativize the absolute, the really real, the non-dual reality. If there is a single reality as Rāmānuja claims, there cannot be another force to execute the process of relativizing it. From Taylor's perspective, the unity of the self and Brahman is more equivalent to pure difference because 'There can no more be identity without difference than there can be difference apart from identity.'[92] Rāmānuja replies that perceiving difference in an object is due to the limits of perception and judg-ment. Moreover, one cannot correctly claim, as Taylor does, that difference and non-difference exist in the same object or subject.

The human body is not envisioned as a mode of the soul for Taylor who finds the body grotesque: 'The body as grotesque is the body that eats, drinks, shits, pisses, and fucks.'[93] Within the context of carnivalesque play, this transgressive and liminal body disrupts self-identity and any sense of moral and ethical propriety for the individual. By incarnating liminality, the grotesque body of Taylor represents an actual margin that possesses no relation to God or the self in Rāmānuja's sense.

If the world represents the body of Brahman for Rāmānuja, there is no difference between the world and Brahman.[94] There is also an essential identity between the self and Brahman: 'This non-difference is due to the soul, as well as the highest self, having the essential nature of uniform intelligence.'[95] Normally, a human being perceives a difference between one's own self and the highest reality. After meditating on Brahman, any perceived difference will be destroyed, and the self recognizes itself in unity with Brahman.[96] This type of assertion is a perfect example of narcissism from Taylor's position. By using the entire world as his mirror, the narcissist sees his/her own face reflected. From Taylor's perspective, the alleged identity between Brahman and Ātman is an effort by the narcissist to possess the other, representing 'an indirect attempt to possess one's own self.'[97]

For those postmodern individuals struggling for autonomy, Taylor thinks that God, the wholly other, is manifested to these people as the shadow of death or eternal death, whereas the God of Rāmānuja is a living deity that incarnates himself when necessary for the welfare of his devotes and his creation. From Taylor's perspective, Rāmānuja's philosophical theology is inscribed in binary terms: God/World; Eternity/Time; Presence Absence; One/Many; Order/Chaos; Life/Death. Taylor calls this type of thought hierarchical oppression that makes it necessary to proceed through a process of inversion. The purpose of a dialectical inversion is to overcome contrasting opposites by dissolving their original identities: 'Inversion, in other words, must simultaneously be a perversion that is subversive.'[98] From Rāmānuja's perspective Taylor's position is radical, decadent, and a product of ignorance. Moreover, Taylor argues that the death of God possesses repercussions for a representational mode of thinking: 'To embrace the death of God is to affirm "the deleterious absurdity of time" in which meaning is eternally sacrificed in a potlach that is as pointless as the pyramid on which it is staged. The sacrifice of God is the death of the transcendental signified, classical regime of re-presentation.'[99]

Taylor and Rāmānuja are also at odds over the power of consciousness and writing. According to Taylor, consciousness can only deal with signs and can never reach the thing itself or God because a sign is a sign of a sign,[100] whereas Rāmānuja thinks that pure consciousness can know God directly and not as a relative sign that related to other signs.

PURE CONSCIOUSNESS AND INFINITY

In his philosophical writings, Emmanuel Levinas equates God with infinity and otherness: 'Infinity is characteristic of a transcendent being as transcendent; the infinite is the absolutely other.'[101] Infinity is not an object that we can perceive, a concept that we can think, or an idea that we can conceptualize. To think of infinity is always more than one can think, and it is not totally grasped or extinguished by any thought that thinks it.[102] The

utterly exterior nature of infinity and our inability to visualize it or form a concept of it are indicative of its ability to destroy the limits of our intellectual horizons. Since infinity cannot be an object of human thinking because it is always more than one can think, it is a desire that cannot be satisfied.[103] There can thus be no evidence or certainty of God because he is not manifested in the phenomenal world. Yet it is possible to hear the voice of the invisible God speaking an ethical imperative in a distinct relationship of proximity, which takes the form of a responsibility for the other.[104]

From Abhinavagupta's perspective, Levinas' infinite is the product of a philosophical mind and not an example of a living deity. Even though Abhinavagupta agrees with Levinas that God is always more than one can think or comprehend, he disagrees that we cannot find evidence or know God created the thirty-six categories that constitute the universe and consists of a universal creative vibration (*sāmānya spanda*) grounded in Śiva's pure consciousness that is identical with the pure consciousness of the self.[105] It is thus possible to find evidence of God within the world and oneself. By means of gaining enlightenment, one can gain certainty about God. To refer to God as infinity gives the impression to a thinker like Abhinavagupta that Levinas is thinking about something static. Because he is continually contracting and expanding, Śiva is in a state of perpetual movement or vibration (spanda).[106] Śiva is also a personal God for Abhinavagupta and not the apparently impersonal infinity of Levinas' philosophical writings. Moreover, Levinas fails to account for the creative power (śakti) of God from Abhinavagupta's point of view.

Unable to add on to itself, the irreducible infinite of Levinas represents the negation of the finite: 'The *in* of infinity is not a *not* like any other; its negation is the subjectivity of the subject, which is behind intentionality. The difference between the Infinite and the finite is behind intentionality.[107] The *in* of infinity represents its difference from the finite, and at the same time manifests its non-difference to the finite. Abhinavagupta also defines the ultimate as both different and non-different (*bhedābheda*). What appears to be different things that we perceive in the world are really identical. From one perspective, it is the experience of difference that makes unity meaningful,

which is possible because all things are a manifestation of the single pure consciousness (saṃvid) identical to Śiva.

By emphasizing the absolute otherness of infinity Levinas wants to stress its mysterious character, which in turn 'constitutes its alterity.'[108] Since alterity represents the essence of the other, the other is what I am not, a third person singular constituting a second person singular with whom I enter into proximity, and as the other approaches me it also withdraws from our encounter. Coming from beyond being, the arrival and withdrawal of the third person singular is an unexpressible and irreversible pronoun that escapes every relation and is unencompassable.[109] The entire infinity of the completely other, which eludes examination by ontology, represents a movement of infinition that can be called God or illeity, a neologism that is the origin of the alterity of being. Illeity refers to the process of arrival and never-ending withdrawal of the other as it retains its alterity. Rather than alterity representing the essence of the infinity, Abhinavagupta stresses pure consciousness of the ultimate, which helps him account for both its difference and non-difference. From Abhinavagupta's perspective, Levinas' emphasis on alterity with relation to infinity is too one-dimensional. Conversely, Levinas views Abhinavagupta's philosophy as committing a violent act against the utter alterity of infinity by placing it into a horizon of expectation in advance and keeping the wholly other within the confines of the same.

When the other arrives, according to Levinas, it presents its face to me. By its very nature, this face exceeds any idea of the other that I might possess. Levinas thinks that the face indicates the philosophical priority of being, or what he calls existent, over Being, a position that is contrary to that of Heidegger.[110] Representing a visitation from beyond and transcendence, a face is not to be confused with the appearance or sign of some reality: 'A face does not function in proximity as a sign of a hidden God who would impose the neighbour on me. It is a trace of itself, a trace in the trace of an abandon, where the equivocation is never dissipated.'[111] The face as a trace is both ambiguous and an invitation to the risk of approach or the exposure of oneself to the other. This does not mean that by following traces of the infinite we can discover its presence because a trace is effaced in a face.[112]

By acknowledging that the face is a trace that effaces itself upon its arrival, Levinas is asserting that it is not possible to achieve identity with infinity from Abhinavagupta's perspective because there is nothing that the self, world, and infinity share in common except difference. For Abhinavagupta, Śiva is identical with the universe because the latter shares with God the light of consciousness.[113] Even though Śiva projects his various manifestations through the process of vibration (spanda) in which there are appearances of differences, there is a total absence of difference within the highest consciousness.[114] Moreover, by its participation in the light of pure consciousness that is free from the influence of illusion (māyā), the self is identical with Śiva, pure consciousness with pure consciousness.[115]

Another area of dispute between Levinas and Abhinavagupta is over ontology. On the one hand, Levinas claims that the notion of Being, or what he calls the 'there is,' does not lead to God: 'Rather than to a God, the notion of the *there is* leads to the absence of God, the absence of any being.'[116] Reacting against the philosophy of Heidegger, Levinas takes this position because Being transcends the distinction between inwardness and exteriority and other types of distinction by dissolving differences. On the other hand, Abhinavagupta equates pure Being (*sattā*) with the inner aspect of Śiva's universal consciousness and ultimate form of Śiva's power which is conceived as eternal becoming.[117] Because it is connected with the movement of absolute consciousness, Being is transformed by the movement of consciousness from its uncreated state to a created state of becoming, an outer aspect of universal consciousness.[118]

TRACES OF GOD

Derrida has not written at great length or systematically about God, but he does have, however, some provocative things to say about the subject. The Indian philosopher Madhva has had much to say about God or ultimate reality, and some of these thoughts are unique contributions to Indian philosophy. Since the notion of difference plays such a prominent role in the philosophies of each thinker, it will prove instructive to compare the diverse perspectives of these individuals.

Because human beings have allowed themselves to be separated from life by God according to Derrida, they have ruined the divine by polluting it.[119] This story of pollution is told in the history of God as a saga of stolen value, and it is recalled as a history of defecation: 'This history of God is thus the history of the work as excrement. Scatology itself.'[120] This history embodies superstition by humans and persecution of humans by God, a sinner against the divine. The only hope for the salvation of human beings is the death of God, a sole means of reawakening the divine.[121] Taking the death of God in a radical direction, Derrida asserts that it is not the living God that humans must fear, but it is the 'Death-God' that we should fear because 'God is Death,'[122] a connection that is also made by Taylor as previously noted. The terms God and death both represent limits that suggests for Derrida the unpredictable coming of an event[123]

If God is both life and death, God is simultaneously all and nothing, which suggests that God is named within the difference between the opposites—all and nothing, life and death—as difference itself, a history within which God is inscribed.[124] From another perspective, Derrida connects God with difference in another way: 'He is the difference which insinuates itself between myself and myself as my death.'[125] By stressing God's difference, Derrida wants to avoid reducing His otherness. If we refer to God as a creator, king, speaker, or father, we have a tendency to create a subject like ourselves which tends to obliterate the difference between god and ourselves.

Madhva also wants to stress the difference between God and the self, but there is no sense in which God is dead or death itself. From Madhva's perspective, God is absolutely necessary for the functioning of life because without God 'there would result the absence of all activity.'[126] Madhva identifies his living God with Viṣṇu.[127] Madhva's position is based on revealed scripture: 'The one declared (by scripture) to be within but Vishnu.'[128] By equating Viṣṇu with Brahman, Madhva wants to emphasize the personal nature of ultimate reality. If God seems to be absent, this is directly due to the limited nature of our powers of perception, which cannot perceive the non-manifest Brahman who transcends all human perception. Any human effort to gain a direct vision of God amounts to nothing without his grace.[129] In another context, Madhva asserts that Brahman,

a subject of all revealed scripture, can be perceived by means of the words of scripture, which is self-authoritative, and the only way to prove the existence of God.[130]

In contrast to Madhva's proof for the existence of God, Derrida offers a possible reading of the interminable apophatic movement of discourse. Within the context of a negative theology, God is the origin and end of such a negative work, functioning as the truth of all negativity. This type of approach would be unlike a proof for the existence of God, but it would rather be like a proof based on the effects of God. Within this context, God is name, without which one would not know how to account for any form of grammatical or logical negativity, which helps us to realize a negative manifestation of God.[131] This helps us to grasp that a divine cause does not need to be present. At this point, it is possible to see in Derrida's philosophy that God is the result of an 'effacement of a quasi-transcendental structure that, as a structure of "thought," is older than the thinking of Being. God is the exemplary effacement not only of the ontico-ontological difference but of the difference between that originary difference and the ontic difference as well.'[132] Therefore, God is not a metaphysical principle or basis of being, and God does not represent the creation of moral laws or the foundation for moral behaviour. God is also not a witness to one's moral transgressions with respect to one's word, thought, or deed.

Due to the stress placed upon language in his philosophy, it is no surprise to find Derrida reflecting on the name of God. Whether it is before or beyond other names, the name of God is the trace of the singular event that renders speech possible even before it begins to respond to the other, even though the name of God identifies nothing that exists.[133] Since this name signifies nothing for Derrida, it can neither name divinity or finitude, although the trace of God not only precedes Him but also summons God to exemplify it. With this impossible task in mind, it is a bit easier to understand that the name of God reflects a collapse of language, although a trace of this negative process is inscribed as an event.[134] Assuming the form of a seal, this event is committed to keeping a secret under the indecipherable signature that seals the borderline event. After the event, there arrives the *post-scriptum*, an advent of a wounded

writing that is marked by its own shortcomings. The post-scriptum is a countersignature: 'This mark takes place after taking place, in a slight, discreet, but powerful movement of dislocation, on the unstable and divided edge of what is called language.'[135] Derrida is trying to point beyond God as name, naming, named, or nameable. He is not trying to suggest a thing or place, but going beyond God is a movement of transcendence itself 'that surpasses God himself, being, essence, the proper or the selfsame, the *Selbst* or Self of God, the divinity of God (*Gottheit*)...'[136] The purpose of this movement of transcendence, is, borrowing a term from Heidegger, *Gelassenheit* which suggests to leave or abandon God, to let Him be beyond being. By its ability to stimulate pleasure and enjoyment, Gelassenheit does the following: 'It opens the play of God (of God and with God, of God with self and with creation); it opens to the enjoyment of God.'[137]

Madhva's stress on the difference between human beings and God is his own attempt to let God be God, but he disagrees with Derrida's intention about going beyond God in a process of transcendence because there is nothing beyond, God, a name for the highest reality. Moreover, any movement of transcendence on the part of human beings is due to the grace of God. From Madhva's perspective, Derrida's references to surpassing God or transcendence reflects a desire to become God. This desire is not only wrong and misguided, but is also doomed to failure.[138] For Madhva, play is not something to be achieved in the future as Derrida suggests. Play, an overflowing of God's bliss and mercy, is always present as it was at the origin of the world when the divine being created the cosmos in the spirit of play (līlā). With the context of the spirit of play, we can ask the following question: Does it make any difference if we write the name of God or Being?

In a critical analysis of Heidegger's ontology, Derrida raises a rhetorical question: 'In reality, as being is not (a being) and in truth is not mere nothing (that is), what difference is there between writing Being, this *Being* which is not, and writing *God*, this God of whom Heidegger also says that it is not?'[139] Since Heidegger claims that God is neither being nor Being and acknowledges that God introduces Himself in the dimension of Being, there does not appear to be much difference between

writing a theology or writing about Being. According to Derrida, Heidegger did not adhere to his own argument about the necessity of avoiding confusion between ontology and theology.[140] In response to Derrida's question about Heidegger's ontology, Madhva claims that there is no difference between writing God or writing Being because Brahman is the highest ontological principle in his philosophy and existence is a practical test of the reality of something.[141]

Although it cannot be ascertained with absolute certainty, it is interesting to speculate about the kind of God that Derrida might want to worship, if he was inclined to turn to a deity? It is not the God of the Genesis myth that introduced a difference between Himself, heaven, and earth. Since the God of Genesis appears in scripture, He is already a product of language that is inscribed in language and is a function of it. If we give Derrida an opportunity to choose his own God, it would most likely be a God or writing. He provides some evidence from one of his works about the identity and nature of such a deity: 'The god of writing is thus also a god of medicine. Of "medicine": both a science and an occult *drug*. Of the remedy and the poison. The god of writing is the god of the *pharmakon*. And it is writing as a *pharmakon* that he presents to the king in the *Phaedrus*, with a humility as unsettling as a dare.'[142] This god of writing and medicine fits a classical definition of God as a *coincidentia oppositorum*, a conjunction of the opposites of remedy and poison, of life and death. A different perspective on this kind of speculation is provided by Caputo: 'For Derrida, God is not an object but an *addressee*, not a matter for theological clarification but the other end of a prayer, given not to cognition but to passion, neither him nor her nor it, but 'you' (*tu*).'[143]

By taking seriously Derrida's attempt to overcome the legacy of onto-theology in the West, Jean-Luc Marion wants to free God from Being in his work. Before God is a being, He is equated with love. Marion identifies two forms of idolatry: God as Being and God according to onto-theology.[144] Marion is not asserting that God is not or that God is not truly God. What is important to him is for us to be free of idolatry and to enable us to think God, a purpose that suggests that the ontological difference is too limited. Thus it is necessary to cross out the term 'God' by placing an x through the o of the name: God. This position does not suggest that God must disappear as a concept or that God is dead, but it rather implies that God, an unthinkable entity, enters into the horizon of our thought as that which is excessive to the field of our thought and critical of our thought.[145] If God is not Being, how is it possible to know God?

Marion answers this question by stating that God gives himself as a gift. More specifically, God gives himself as *agapē*, which designates his divergence from Being. By giving Himself as the gift of love, God is starting from Himself in order to give Himself 'to be thought as a thought of the gift.'[146] After encountering it, his gift strikes out the ontological difference between Being/being and opens it like a window. This scenario suggests that Being/being is given buy the gift itself: 'It delivers it in the sense first that the gift gives Being/being and puts it into play, opens it to its sending, as in order to launch it into its destiny.'[147] In the final analysis for Marion, god cannot be called a being or Being, and God should not be confused with an essence. God is love, which does not have to be: 'And God loves without being.'[148]

In contrast to Marion's God without Being, Radhakrishnan refers to God as a personal being, a creative genius, immanent within the world, saviour and redeemer, and most importantly as love, whom he thinks takes precedence over God's wisdom or sovereignty.[149] Although Radhakrishnan and Marion agree that God is to be equated with love and disagree about whether or not God can be equated with Being, the former thinker and neo-Vedāntist, following the Advaita Vedānta lead of Śaṅkara, makes a distinction between God and the Absolute: 'While the Absolute is pure consciousness and pure freedom and infinite possibility, it appears to be God from the point of view of the one specific possibility which has become actualised, while God is organically bound up with the universe, the Absolute is not.'[150] Radhakrishnan is making the classical Vedāntic distinction made by Śaṅkara between saguṇa (with qualities) and nirguṇa (without qualities) Brahman. Thus God is the Absolute (Brahman) as viewed from the human point of view. Radhakrishnan thinks that we can refer to the Absolute as representing 'the pre-cosmic nature of God, and God is the Absolute from the cosmic point of view.'[151] From the perspective of Radhakrishnan, it is nonsensical to discuss God devoid of Being as Marion does in

his work. Being is not in any sense idolatrous for Radhakrishnan, although he agrees with Marion that God in the sense of the Absolute represents something excessive to our normal modes of thinking.

DIFFERENCE AND IDENTITY

According to Derrida, différance is a finite movement that is ontically neutral, whereas Śaṅkara defines sublation as a mental process of rectification that is not neutral. Moreover, Śaṅkara thinks that his sense of difference is either homogenous (sajātīya), heterogeneous (vijātīya), or internal (svagata) in the sense of parts of a whole.[152] Différance is not an ultimate entity or state of Being, although it does make it possible for Brahman, for instance, to exist. For Śaṅkara, Brahman does not owe its origin to anything else and represents the source of all things; its presence is taken for granted by Śaṅkara, although it is possible for ignorant individuals to superimpose non-original characteristics upon it. According to Derrida, différance represents the play of traces, a topic that will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

The way that Derrida defines and uses différance in his work seems to suggest that it is, in its own odd way, a temporal and spatial monistic principle because it governs so much of his philosophy. There is a danger inherent within Derrida's position, or more accurately non-philosophical position, that tends to undermine it. Because there can be no difference, if there is only différance.[153] In other words, if there is only différance, all distinctions disappear, resulting in a total identity or monism. This non-original origin of all differences and every identity is neither a word nor concept. Since it is the matrix of all presence and absence, yet is neither present nor absent, it is an irreducible interval in which time and space interconnect, whereas Brahman is beyond all distinctions. Like Brahman, différance is unnamable, but it, functioning as a neologism, cannot be equated with essence or Being unlike Brahman. As the unnamable, différance cannot be uttered, although it is possible to write it. Any writing of the unnamable involves inevitable rewriting without beginning or end, a type of cycle from which Śaṅkara urges those in the world to escape.

From another perspective, différance makes all thought possible for Derrida, but it cannot itself be thought, a position that suggests the complete otherness of it. This is partly why it is wrong for Gasché in his book on Derrida to refer to différance as an infrastructure and a 'nonunitary synthesis of heterogeneous features.'[154] It should be clear by now that Derrida does not conceive of différance as a structure, and it is highly questionable to call it a synthesis or union of any kind. Many of the Indian thinkers want to suggest that it is possible to have an intuitive realization of Brahman that is liberating, whereas Derrida sees no necessity of seeking to unite with the totally other because it is sufficient to affirm the perpetual play of différance. Many of our Indian thinkers would agree with the following criticism of Derrida by McGowan: 'Postmodernism finds in difference that principle of multiplicity, or irreducibility, that allows it to escape the totalizing visions it associates with necessity and unfreedom. What I want to emphasize is that this commitment to difference stems from a negative image of freedom.'[155] Although freedom for many Indian philosophers represents freedom from the world, there is also the positive freedom of transcendence.[156]

With the exception of Madhva, Derrida's philosophical position suggests that seeking identity with Brahman or Śiva is an example of humans wanting to become God: 'Man, one might say, is a God arrived too early, that is, a God who knows himself forever late in relation to the already—there of Being.'[157] For Śaṅkara, at least, one can become the absolute single reality, and other Indian philosophers discuss other versions of the unitive experience, a possibility that does not appear to be a viable option for Derrida because he repudiates a single reality as the ground of thought and being. This type of position leads Wyschogrod to characterize postmodern thought as henophobic: 'The attack on unity is bound up with postmodernism's antifoundationalism, its antipathy toward the notion that there is a privileged source of truth and meaning, whether a transcendent divine Other or human consciousness.'[158] We have noticed the henophobic nature of postmodern thought throughout this chapter. From Derrida's point of view, it is impossible to have a unitive experience with a trace or death. Since the movement of différance is necessarily finite,

it also represents a movement of death, or what God becomes in fact. It is as if the flow of différance engulfs the wholly other and drowns it. If God is equated with death for Derrida and Taylor, Indian thinkers with a personal deity, like Rāmānuja, Abhinavagupta, and Madhva, might ask the following questions: Can anyone pray to death? Can anyone have a personal relation to death? Can anyone have a unitive experience with death?

In contrast to the seriousness of purpose and possibility of certitude espoused by the Indian thinkers in this chapter, Derrida plays the role of the mime who manages to occupy a position outside, or at least on the edges, of the western philosophical tradition. The role of miming fits Derrida perfectly because of the following reason: 'The speculum reflects no reality; it produces mere "reality-effect".'[159] From the perspective of Śaṅkara, the mime—Derrida—plays on the level of appearance where differences exist, whereas the Indian philosophers, with the exception of Madhva, are primarily interested in the state of non-difference. In the Derridean spirit of play, it is possible to imagine that Śaṅkara might be tempted, for instance, to reply to Derrida that the level of knowledge from which one writes philosophy makes all the difference concerning the difference that différance makes.

Besides its anti-metaphysical nature, difference—or as Derrida would say, différance—constructs a roadblock for rationality and indicates the limits of reason. We have noted an emphasis in this chapter on heterology by postmodern thinkers with an emphasis on gaps, pauses, discontinuity, and division and a stress on the relativity of knowledge. Although Derrida is not anti-rational, he does not engage in strict and consistent rationality as much as he enters into play, the play of différance that originates before all differences. Although it originates before all differences, it reveals itself in the present moment and serves as the structure of the mind, but it does not create presence itself. Derrida's notion of différance, a differing as spacing and temporalizing, allows him to play in the realm of philosophy, but it does not require him to assume a given philosophical position. From within the perspective of différance, Derrida seems to suggest that rationality possesses ontological commitments. The rationality of which we are aware is the

product of an historical development that cannot function as some kind of ultimate foundation for thinking. Derrida wants to re-think both the origin of reason and the possibility of whether or not rationality is reasonable. Thus Derrida's method of deconstruction and his attempt to think différance is an attempt to think the limits of reason and to push rationality to its limits.

ENDNOTES

1. Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 6.
2. Irene Harvey, *Derrida and the Economy of Différance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), p. 44.
3. Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York, Evanston, London: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1969), p. 50.
4. Ibid., p. 62.
5. Ibid., p. 69.
6. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele, Theory and History of Literature, Volume 46 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 13.
7. Ibid., p. 138.
8. Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard and trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 152–7.
9. Ibid., p. 153.
10. Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, trans. Brian Massumi, Theory and History of Literature, Vol. 17 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 177
11. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 130.
12. Ibid., p. 134.
13. Ibid., p. 134.
14. Śaṅkara, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 3.3.9; *Upadeśasāhasrī*, 2.3.3–4. See also the discussion of Eliot Deutsch, *Advaita Vedānta: A Philosophical Reconstruction* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1969), pp. 15–17.
15. Śaṅkara, *Upadeśasāhasrī*, 18.4.
16. Ibid., 1.17.16.
17. R. Balasubramanian, *Advaita Vedānta* (Madras: University of Madras, 1976), p. 117.
18. Śaṅkara, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 2.1.13.
19. Śaṅkara, *Upadeśasāhasrī*, 1.19.5.
20. Hiriyanna, pp. 187–8.
21. Śaṅkara, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 2.1.14.

22. Ibid., 2.3.47.
23. Śaṅkara, *Upadeśasāhasrī*, 1.14.42.
24. Ibid., 1.17.6.
25. Rāmānuja, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 1.1.1.
26. Caputo, p. 3.
27. Rāmānuja, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 1.1.1.
28. Ibid., 1.1.4.
29. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 62.
30. Ibid., p. 47.
31. Ibid., p. 61.
32. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 141.
33. Derrida, *Positions*, p. 27.
34. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 292.
35. Rāmānuja, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 1.1.1.
36. Rāmānuja, *Vedārthasaṁgraha*, p. 85.
37. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 134.
38. Abhinavagupta, *Tantrāloka*, 4.254.
39. Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 4.
40. Derrida, *Positions*, p. 27.
41. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, pp. 129–30.
42. Derrida, *Psyché*, p. 558.
43. Derrida, *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 29.
44. Abhinavagupta, *Īśvara-Pratyabhijñā-Vimarśinī*, 3 vols, ed. and trans. K. C. Pandey (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), 1.6.4–5.
45. Ibid., 1.8.1.
46. Ibid., 1.6.9.
47. Ibid., 1.7.3.
48. Ibid., 2.3.14.
49. Harvey P. Alper, 'Śiva and the Ubiquity of Consciousness: The Spaciousness of an Artful Yogi', *Journal of Indian Philosophy* Vol. 7 (1979), p. 355.
50. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 149.
51. Madhva, *Śrimad-Viṣṇu-Tattva-Vinisṇaya of Śri Madhvācārya*, trans. S. S. Raghavachar (Mangalore: Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, 1959), p. 119.
52. Ibid., p. 122.
53. Suzanne Siauve gives a more detailed account of Madhva's notion of difference (pp. 189–207) in *La doctrine de Madhva: Dvaita-Vedānta*, Publication de l' Institut Français d' Indologie No. 38 (Pondichéry: Institut Français d' Indologie, 1968).
54. Ibid., p. 424.
55. *Expositor*, I, 86; II, 410.
56. Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 11.

57. P. T. Raju finds it strange that Madhva treats witness consciousness as a sense in *Structural Depths of Indian Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), p. 483.
58. Derrida, *Signéponge*, p. 14.
59. Madhva, *Viṣṇu-Tattva-Vinirṇaya*, p. 283.
60. Sharma, *Philosophy of Madhvācārya*, pp. 58–9.
61. Madhva, *Viṣṇu-Tattva-Vinirṇaya*, p. 340.
62. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 153.
63. Śaṅkara, *Commentary on Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 2.2.1.
64. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 158.
65. Derrida, *Spurs*, trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago and London University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 103–5.
66. Śaṅkara, *Commentary on Bṛhadaraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 2.3.6.
67. Caputo, p. 9.
68. Śaṅkara, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 1.1.11.
69. John Braisted Carman, *The Theology of Rāmānuja* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 159.
70. Ibid., p. 100.
71. Rāmānuja, *Vedārthasaṁgraha*, p. 77.
72. Carman, p. 135.
73. Taylor, *Erring*, p. 10.
74. Ibid., p. 10.
75. Ibid., p. 98.
76. Ibid., p. 20.
77. Ibid., p. 23.
78. Rāmānuja, *Bhagavadgītā*, 13.2.
79. Rāmānuja, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 1.1.1. S. Radhakrishnan thinks that Rāmānuja's motivation for not making any distinction between the *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa* Brahman is because 'The nirguna Brahman, which stares at us with frozen eyes regardless of our selfless devotion and silent suffering, is not the god of religious insight,' in *Indian Philosophy*, 2 vols (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1966), II: 682–3. If one examines Indian revealed scripture, one finds that Brahman is defined as one. Does this unity mean that Brahman is without qualities and that Rāmānuja contradicts revealed scripture? S. Dasgupta answers this question by stating: 'When Brahman is referred to in the scriptures as one, that only means that there is no second cause of the world to rival him; but that does not mean that His unity is so absolute that He has no qualities at all,' in *A History of Indian Philosophy*, 5 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962–9), III: 175. Thus Brahman is not without qualities; it is undesirable qualities that are denied by Rāmānuja.
80. Taylor, *Erring*, p. 30.
81. Taylor, *Deconstructing Theology*, American Academy of Religion,

Studies in Religion 28 (New York: Crossroads Publishing Company and Scholars press, 1982), p. 91.

82. Taylor, *Erring*, p. 103.
83. Rāmānuja, *Vedāntasāra*, 2.1.33.
84. Carman, p. 122.
85. Rāmānuja, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 1.1.23.
86. Taylor, *Erring*, p. 160.
87. Ibid., p. 161.
88. Rāmānuja, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 2.1.10.
89. Rāmānuja, *Vedārthasamgraha*, 2.17.
90. Potter, p. 153.
91. Taylor, *Deconstructing Theology*, p. 49.
92. Taylor, *Erring*, p. 109.
93. Ibid., p. 162.
94. Rāmānuja, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 2.1.15.
95. Ibid., 1.1.1.
96. Ibid., 1.1.1.
97. Taylor, *Erring*, p. 29.
98. Ibid., p. 10.
99. Mark C. Taylor, *Hiding* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 233.
100. Taylor, *Erring*, p. 105.
101. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 49.
102. Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, p. 54.
103. Ibid., pp. 56, 163. Derrida criticizes Levinas' notion of Infinity because it loses the other: 'If one thinks, as Levinas does, that positive Infinity tolerates, or even requires, infinite alterity, then one must renounce all language, and first of all the words *infinite* and *other*. Infinity cannot be understood as Other except in the form of the in-finite. As soon as one attempts to think Infinity as a positive plenitude...the other becomes unthinkable, impossible, unutterable,' in *Writing and Difference*, p. 114.
104. Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, p. 46.
105. Abhinavagupta, *Trident of Wisdom*, p. 77.
106. Abhinavagupta, *Tantrāloka*, 4.181–93.
107. Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, p. 162.
108. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, p. 87.
109. Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, pp. 103–4.
110. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 51.
111. Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, p. 94. Derrida claims that the notion of face in Levinas' philosophy represents a form of presence in *Writing and Difference*, p. 101.
112. Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, p. 12.
113. Abhinavagupta, *Īśvara-Pratyabhijñā-Vimarśinī*, 2.4.20.

114. Abhinavagupta, *Trident of Wisdom*, p. 120.
115. Abhinavagupta, *Īśvara-Pratyabhijñā-Vimarśinī*, 4.1.1, 4.1.12.
116. Levinas, *Existence*, p. 61.
117. Abhinavagupta, *Tantrāloka*, 3.93.
118. Ibid., 4.122.
119. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 243.
120. Ibid., p. 182.
121. Ibid., p. 184.
122. Ibid., p. 246.
123. Jacques Derrida, 'Circumfession: Fifty-nine Periods and Periphrases', in *Jacques Derrida* by Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 206.
124. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 116.
125. Ibid., p. 181.
126. Madhva, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 2.2.4.
127. Ibid., 1.1.1.
128. Ibid., 1.1.20.
129. Ibid., 3.2.23.
130. Ibid., 1.1.4–5, 2.1.28.
131. Derrida, *Psyché*, pp. 538–9.
132. Rodolphe Gasché, *Invention of Difference: On Jacques Derrida* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 163.
133. Derrida, *Psyché*, p. 560.
134. Derrida, 'Post-Scriptum', p. 560.
135. Ibid., p. 304.
136. Ibid., p. 307.
137. Ibid., p. 317.
138. Madhva, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 3.4.41.
139. Derrida, *Psyché*, p. 592. My translation.
140. Ibid., p. 592.
141. Sharma, *Philosophy of Madhvācārya*, p. 59.
142. Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 94.
143. Caputo, p. 143.
144. Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. xxi.
145. Ibid., p. 46.
146. Ibid., p. 49.
147. Ibid., p. 101.
148. Ibid., p. 138.
149. Radhakrishnan, *Idealist View of Life*, pp. 340, 342.
150. Ibid., p. 343.
151. Ibid., p. 345.
152. Mohanty, p. 163.

153. Stanly Rosen, *Hermeneutics as Politics* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 73.

154. Rodolphe Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 195. Richard Rorty is critical of Gasché's interpretation of Derrida as someone constructing infrastructures. Rorty views Derrida's various heterogeneous features in the following way: '...I see these notions as merely abbreviations for the familiar Peircean-Wittgensteinian anti-Cartesian thesis that meaning is a function of context, and that there is no theoretical barrier to an endless sequence of recontexualizations,' in *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, p. 125. I agree with Rorty that the last thing that Derrida wants to do is to create more structures.

155. McGowan, p. 86.

156. For a useful discussion of liberation while embodied, see Andrew O. Fort, *Jivanmukti in Transformation: Embodied Liberation in Advaita and Neo-Vedanta* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998).

157. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 107.

158. Wyschogrod, p. 234.

159. Derrida, *Dissemination*, p. 206.



Ontology and Alterity

Why are there entities that exist rather than nothing? According to Martin Heidegger, this is the most fundamental and profound question that one can ask oneself. Moreover, by asking this question, one proves that one already has some notion about what should be the answer. This ability of ours to raise the question about being suggests that we have a pre-understanding of being. This ontological inquiry is more primordial than the ontic inquiry of the positive sciences that are concerned with entities and facts about them.[1] And yet we cannot demonstrate the nature of being because we cannot get outside of being itself in order to describe it. From Heidegger's perspective, western philosophy has forgotten about being, which remains hidden from metaphysics. In order to counter a historical tradition of the hidden and forgotten nature of being, one must attempt to disclose it by means of phenomenology, a method to make manifest the Being of beings or what shows itself.[2]

The mode of being proper to a human is existence (*Existenz*), a term that suggests 'standing out toward.' This implies that for a person to realize oneself, one must come out of oneself or become a self-transcending being, something that one primordially possesses along with intentionality. This also suggests that existence is an irruption (*Einbruch*) into the totality of beings, which renders it possible for these beings to become

manifest as beings. This occurs within a world that is already given to one in one's concern, familiarity, and preoccupation with it. Thus an individual is not an isolated knowing subject who first apprehends his/her own existence and then seeks proof for an external world because the world is already pre-given to an individual. The existence of a self-transcending individual means that one is a being-in-the-world. Being-in does not refer to a spatial sense, like a letter is in an envelope. It is also not the being present-at-hand of some corporeal thing.[3] Being-in, an existentiale in Heidegger's terms, manifests the facticity of Dasein (there being): 'The concept of "facticity" implies that an entity "within-the-world" has Being-in-the-world in such a way that it can understand itself as bound up in its "destiny" with the Being of those entities which it encounters within its own world.'[4] Heidegger states that Dasein is 'lit-up' (*erleuchtet*), which means that it is not illumined by another being, but that it is rather itself the process of lighting (*Lichtung*) or disclosedness, forming its innermost constitution and not something added to it. As a Being-in-the-world, Dasein essentially relates its Being toward the world as concern, an ontological term used for an existentiale that suggests a way of Being-in.

Although Heidegger's approach to the topic of Being is much different than that of Radhakrishnan, a twentieth-century neo-Vedānta philosopher, both thinkers agree about the primacy of Being. The very existence of the world, for Radhakrishnan, suggests the existence of Being, the source of the world itself. If we claim that something exists we are using the concept of Being. Without Being, it would be impossible for anything to exist because 'Being is in all that exists.'[5] Radhakrishnan does not think that Being is an abstraction, but it rather forms the very structure of reality. Radhakrishnan takes his discussion of Being beyond the self-imposed limits of Heidegger's phenomenological method to assert that without Being, it would be impossible for God to exist.[6] According to Radhakrishnan, when we perceive Being we are also perceiving divine reality. But Radhakrishnan does not intend to claim that we need to get outside of the world to perceive Being because the world is within Being, and we encounter Being within the world. If this were not the case, we could not affirm that things associated with individuals exist.[7]

Heidegger's approach is different from that of Radhakrishnan because the former claims that in our everyday concern we encounter things in the world that Heidegger refers to as equipment that serves the purpose of 'in order to.' This means that we see what equipment is by our dealing with it because it shows itself in our dealing with it. What we discover is that the Being of equipment is readiness-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*).[8] Equipment is never isolated by itself, but it is always in reference to other equipment. If a piece of equipment is ready to hand, a necessary condition for an encounter with its being is letting it be. Not only is equipment equiprimordially present to Dasein, but others are also present to it and-in-the-world along with Dasein. By dealing with equipment within the world, we also discover others because they are also involved with pieces of equipment.

If along with Dasein there are also others, Being-in implies Being-with (*Mitsein*), which suggests that one always shares the world with others.[9] If one is necessarily a being-in-the-world, one's existence is already a being together with others. Being-with indicates a community that is made possible by the mutual relation of two beings. To be 'with' another being suggests a certain communion between the other and me. Heidegger states that others are encountered environmentally which means that one's meeting with others is an elemental worldly kind of encounter.[10] The others that we encounter are objects of our solicitude, which corresponds to concern and is guided by considerateness and forbearance, and can allow us to leap in for the other or leap ahead of the other in the other's existentiell potentiality for Being. This second possibility of solicitude relates to authentic care that can help the other to become transparent to himself or herself in his/her own care and to be free for it.[11] Although Radhakrishnan would articulate his position differently than Heidegger, it is evident by his work that he agrees with Heidegger that we are beings-within-the-world and that we exist with others.

According to Heidegger, it should be evident that Being toward others is ontologically different from being towards things which are present-at-hand because the other possesses the same kind of being as Dasein: 'In Being with and towards Others there is thus a relationship of being [Seinverhältnis] from Dasein to Dasein.'[12] Being toward Others is an autonomous,

irreducible relationship of Being. We encounter Others as what they are, which means for Heidegger what they do. Thus Heidegger's philosophy necessarily combines ontology with alterity, whereas Radhakrishnan is more concerned with the relationship between Being and non-being.

Radhakrishnan perceives two related but antagonistic principles: 'The world process can only be conceived as a struggle between two antagonistic but indispensable principles of being and non-being.'[13] Heidegger views the relationship between Being and non-being in terms of a unity because Dasein exists ahead-of-itself and achieves its wholeness by means of its death or non-being. Heidegger thinks that the essence of Being is to appear, to emerge from concealment, while non-being withdraws from appearing, from presence.[14] Not only does Being imply non-being, but non-being, a source of negation, is in Being and integral to it because it grants the is-character to Being.[15] Thus, for Heidegger, Being and non-being are intertwined, whereas Radhakrishnan views them at odds with each other. Radhakrishnan also thinks in contrast to Heidegger that non-being is a limiting concept on the objective side of life in the sense of functioning as a name for that which is unknown, and it is ultimately an abstraction, an absence of form.[16] Radhakrishnan and Heidegger agree, however, that non-being is dependent upon Being. And Heidegger would agree with the spirit of Radhakrishnan's statement that 'We can attain illumination of Being by facing bitterly the ultimate meaning of nothingness.'[17]

In our relationship with Other for Heidegger, we attend with constant care to the way we differ from Others. Being-with-one-another is, however, disturbed by distance between one person and another in such a way that Dasein is in subjection to Others. From Heidegger's perspective, this represents a serious danger because the Being of Dasein is robbed by the indefinite Others. Heidegger refers to these imprecise Others as *das Man* or they.[18] The way of being of das Man is averageness, revealing a tendency to 'levelling down' of all possibilities of Being.[19] Thus the ways of being of the das Man can be summarized as distantiality, averageness, and levelling, which combine to form an inauthentic way of Being: 'The Self of everyday Dasein is the *they-self,* which we distinguish from the *authentic Self*

that is, from the Self which has been taken hold of in its own way.'[20] By being dispersed and losing its identity in the das Man, the individual Dasein is challenged to find itself. Radhakrishnan is not unaware of the dangers associated with such a phenomenon, although he is more apt to stress the threat of non-being in his writing.

As evident from what has been related already, a fundamental distinction made by the phenomenology of Heidegger is that between a being and its Being which he calls the ontological difference, a distinction that precedes the ontical distinction of a single being from another being. In other words, Being is the Being of beings or its difference, and an individual being is a being of Being, which suggests that Being grounds beings. Based on the grounding character of Being, there is nothing without a ground because everything stands under the claims of the principle of ground.[21] Heidegger recognizes the potential for confusion and tries to clarify his position: 'Only this much is clear, that when we deal with the Beings of beings and with the beings of Beings, we deal in each case with a difference.'[22] This difference is already there in the distinction between Being and beings. Not without Being, a particular being is always arriving in the unconcealment of Being, representing a self-concealing, an arrival and a presencing.[23] Comparing Radhakrishnan to Heidegger, it can be affirmed that the former is not unaware of the ontological distinction, although Radhakrishnan's position is to be distinguished from that of Heidegger because he equates Being with Brahman, a pure, indescribable, necessary, dynamic, and free Being. And Radhakrishnan equates Being and consciousness in the so-called integral experience, a completely real mode of Being and a regaining of ontological integrity and wholeness for a person.[24] Both philosophers agree, however, that being represents the foundation of all existence. From one perspective, Radhakrishnan pushes this point philosophically further then Heidegger by equating absolute Being (Brahman) with absolute freedom.[25]

This somewhat long introductory dialogue to this chapter is necessary to set the stage for a discussion of various postmodern thinkers because Heidegger influenced many of them, and the works of some of them are reactions to the position of Heidegger. In the remainder of this chapter we will focus on the problems

of ontology and alterity, which Heidegger helps us to grasp as interrelated issues. We will compare the theoretical position of Levinas with the Indian philosophies of Rāmānuja, Abhinavagupta, and Madhva. We will also examine the notions of presence and trace in the philosophies of Śaṅkara and Derrida. We will then discuss alterity in the works of Levinas, Derrida, and Lacan and engage them in dialogue with Śaṅkara for the most part.

EXISTENCE AND EXISTENT

For Levinas, Being is not anything specific, not a quality, and not an action of a subject. Anonymous Being is the fact that one is or that there is. The fact of existing is an incomparable event of birth that occurs each moment, and that precedes any participation in existence, but it is antecedent to the world.[26] The question about the nature of Being has never been answered because there is no answer to Being: 'The question is itself a manifestation of the relationship with Being. Being is essentially alien and strikes against us. We undergo its suffocating embrace like the night, but it does not respond to us.'[27] Levinas does not exactly embrace Heidegger's ontological distinction. Heidegger focuses his philosophical attention on beings (*Seiendes*) in order to grasp Being (*Sein*), whereas Levinas reverses this procedure. Instead of the distinction between Being (Sein) and beings (Seiendes) made by Heidegger, Levinas renders the distinction existing and existent with the latter that which exists. Why does Levinas reverse Heidegger's, ontological distinction? Levinas wants to evade the overwhelming dominance of Being (Sein) that one finds in Heidegger's philosophy, and he wants to forge a new metaphysics that will reflect a transcendent movement of thinking that is not a hostage to ontology.

By imaging what remains after the destruction of everything, what remains is the bare fact that there is (*il y a*), according to Levinas, which is akin to Heidegger's notion of Dasein. The 'there is' is anonymous, impersonal, a field of forces, without self, and undeniable.[28] The existing is not something that we can simply affirm because it is something that imposes itself upon us and is the location of the production of hypostasis by which anonymous being loses its 'there is' character. Levinas explains what he means: 'Hypostasis, an existent, is a consciousness, because consciousness is localized and posited, and through the act without transcendence of taking a position it comes to being out of itself, and already take refuge in itself from Being in itself.'[29] By rupturing the anonymous nature of the 'there is' consciousness, which is already a hypostasis, makes it possible for an existent (being) to become aware of its existing (Being). Becoming aware of itself, the existent finds itself in the present, an event of hypostasis, and in solitude, an indissoluble unity of the existent and its existing.[30]

Although our Indian thinkers would agree with Levinas that Being possesses a mysterious quality, they would not agree that Being is non-specific, anonymous, or alien. For Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Abhinavagupta, and Madhva, the highest ontological principle is identified as Brahman, an impersonal figure for Śaṅkara but a personal deity for the others. For Rāmānuja, Brahman is not only Being, but it is also the highest lord and person, which is an obvious attempt to stress the personal nature of God.[31] Madhva equates, for instance, being (sat) with his personal deity Viṣṇu.[32] In another context, Madhva refers to God as absolute Being and the cause of all existence.[33] Abhinavagupta agrees that Being embodies the senses of reality and goodness.[34] Absolute being, for Abhinavagupta, is not merely a transcendental unity that underlies empirical existence and is not empirically manifested like it is for Śaṅkara, but it is rather an eternal becoming, which suggests that Being can be connected with the actuality of appearance.[35] Since everything that appears is real for Abhinavagupta, appearance is equivalent to being, whereas appearance is not real for Śaṅkara. Abhinavagupta does not make the ontological distinction of Levinas and the other Indian thinkers in the same way because Being, which he identifies with Śiva, and its various manifestations are both an appearing of something.

Abhinavagupta agrees with Levinas that consciousness forms the hypostasis of being, and it possesses the ability to enable a being to recognize its Being. Consciousness is akin to a lighting process that not only illuminates being but also non-being for Abhinavagupta. If reality is Being and pure consciousness (saṃvid) for members of the school of Kashmir Śaivism, this means that they are synonymous and experiencing their identity is equivalent to enjoying the bliss of realization.[36]

Madhva also thinks that the self-conscious being is self-luminous and can reveal itself to itself, although its consciousness is distinct from itself. For Rāmñuja, it is through consciousness, a form of self-luminosity that the Ātman can become present to itself and see into the ground of its being.[37]

According to Levinas, the individual existent is the ego whose essence is to be for itself the same. The existent exists literally in the sense that it projects itself forth, transcends itself, although it becomes truly an existent when it contracts existence as its own by positing itself, taking a stand, and breaking with the continuity of existence. Because the existent or ego exists ecstatically, the instant of its presence is evanescent. With respect to the evanescent nature of the presence of an existent and the weariness that exists within us for existence, the existent attempts to flee itself, whereas Heidegger refers to the flight toward nothingness. In contrast, to the outer-directed nature of concern for Heidegger, Levinas wants to stress a prior care for oneself and one's existence that is perceived as a burden, a weighty menace that we try to evade.

The Indian philosophers do not share with Levinas his notions of the weariness for existence, the feeling that being is a burden, or that it is necessary for a being to flee from itself. If we are to flee from anything, it is the attractions of the world because these only lead to bondage. However, Abhinavagupta agrees with Levinas that being is a projecting forth, although the Indian philosopher also wants to include a return to the source of being to Being itself or Śiva. The Indian philosophers are also agreed that the presence of being is not evanescent.

In reply to the Buddhist philosophers of the Mādhyamika school and their doctrine of nothingness, Rāmānuja criticizes their position by stating that the terms being and non-being refer 'to particular states of actually existing things only.'[38] Moreover, the Buddhist notion of absolute nothingness cannot be proven by logical means or philosophical argumentation, according to Rāmānuja. Within a different intellectual framework, Madhva encounters the problem of the presence of being when he devotes attention to the relation between being (sat) and non-being (asat) within the context of discussing the creation of the world in an ancient Vedic hymn that mentions non-being springing from being (RV 10.72.2). According to Madhva, being

is a positive entity that possesses no origin and could originate from non-being. What the Vedic creation hymn is saying is that non-being is equivalent to Brahman.[39] Since non-being is the absolute negation of all existence, it cannot be the cause of the world.[40] In another of his works, Madhva equates sat (being) with Brahman, an intelligent and efficient cause, whereas asat (non-being) is the unintelligent and material cause.[41] Along similar lines, Abhinavagupta agrees with the implication of Madhva's position that we cannot experience that which does not exist, although the former would add that being and non-being are merely conceptual and not real distinctions, as Madhva claims, because both opposites are superimposed upon consciousness and are equally apparent to it.[42] With the unification of consciousness, the historically later Śaiva Kashmir philosopher, Maheśvarānanda, thinks that the distinction between being and non-being will be effaced.[43]

According to Levinas, weariness and indolence affect whatever we try to do. The former is connected to refusal: 'Weariness by all its being effects this refusal to exist; it is only in the refusal to exist.'[44] Indolence is connected to the beginning of an action: 'The beginning of an act is already a belongingness and a concern for what it belongs to and for what belongs to it.'[45] Since indolence recoils before action, an inscription in being, we flee indolence by seeking distractions like pleasure. In contrast to Heidegger, Levinas envisions a non-ecstatic form of being in which Being drags down the existent under its weight, and struggles with its heavy burden. Ignorance, karma, desire, and the body are burdens for the Indian philosophers and not being.

The connection between being and action is clarified by the notions of fatigue and instant for Levinas. Fatigue presents itself 'as a stiffening, a numbness, a way of curling up into oneself.'[46] Finding it impossible to deal with the burden of being, one tends to let go of it as one moves to despair. By being weary of being, one begins to break with the sources of life and to condemn being. Fatigue represents the lagging behind of an existent to its existing, and its time-lag creates an interval for the event of the present.[47] This delay forms an inscription in existence that enables one to catch a glimpse of existence, allows one to take charge of the present, and to take up being. This indicates that the existence of an existent is an activity, even though it might

be inactive. The present or instant, a mode of time that stands in itself, represents the internal structure of an existent by allowing it to structure its presence as an instant. This instant represents a new beginning that contains an act that enables one to acquire existence or become initiated into Being.[48] By assuming an intentional stance in an instant, one finds oneself dealing with objects in the world to which one becomes attached. One's intentionality, which is animated by desire, is devoid of care for existing and rather absorbed in what is desirable.[49]

PRESENCE AND TRACE

When Śaṅkara defines Brahman as Being and Ātman as a state of being he suggests that they, which are non-different from each other, are in some sense present, even though we might not be ordinarily aware of this due to our condition of ignorance. Moreover, Śaṅkara affirms that the nature of the self (Ātman) is eternal presence.[50] It can be affirmed that something is because it presents itself to a subject as a present object of perceptual experience, although for Śaṅkara this would be inadequate because of his monistic convictions about the nature of what truly exists. In the case of Brahman and Ātman, by successfully following the path of jñāna-yoga, a way that includes the steps of hearing, reflection on Vedānta philosophical principles, and meditation (*nididhyāsana*), one becomes detached from the phenomenal world and any trace of egoism and an intuitive insight occurs that reveals one's true identity, freeing one from ignorance and the cycle of time and rebirth (saṃsāra).[51] Having become the one universal reality, the individual loses false identity and presence, becoming present as the unity of Brahman and Ātman.

To suggest that Being is present, at least, according to parāvidyā (knowledge of ultimate reality) from Śaṅkara's perspective, is mistaken from the viewpoint of Derrida because we cannot presuppose Being as presence. By calling into question the presence of Being, Derrida does this from the standpoint of différance. What makes such a question even possible is the difference between Being and beings—Heidegger's ontological distinction—a distinction that is only valid for Śaṅkara from the standpoint of lower knowledge, that is perception, comparison,

or inference for instance. For Derrida, an initial consequence is that différance is not being-present.[52] Why is this the case? Différance never presents itself as present because it does not exist, does not belong to any kind of being-present, nor does it belong to a category of being.[53] Because of the movement of différance, presence, which is usually a determination and an effect in a philosophical system, cannot have a privileged place in Derrida's thought.

According to Derrida, the movement of différance renders possible the difference between Being and beings, or what Śaṅkara might call the apparent difference between the Ātman and jīva, individual person existing in the world limited by adjuncts (upādhis), which ceases when the jīva realizes its essential identity with the Ātman.[54] In contrast to the Advaita Vedānta philosophical position, the Derridean movement of différance represents the play of traces: 'It is a trace that no longer belongs to the horizon of Being but one whose sense of Being is borne and bound by this play; it is a play of traces or differance that has not sense and is not, a play that does not belong.'[55] By presenting itself, this does not suggest that the trace presents itself as such but rather when presenting itself effaces itself.

Śaṅkara's response to Derrida at this point is that we take traces of finitude and change, for instance, and apply or superimpose them upon the Ātman, features that do not inherently belong to the nature of the eternal self. This indicates that the practice of superimposition (adhyāsa) occurs when one borrows qualities not immediately present to one's consciousness that properly belong to one thing and by using one's memory of previous experiences, projects these former experiences and their qualities upon something new.[56] What Śaṅkara intends to convey can be referred to as an erroneous attribution of qualities or memory traces recalled from previous experiences. These products of memory are manifested as appearances for Śaṅkara and account for incorrect interpretation. Because the ground of all super-impositions is ultimately undifferentiated and non-dual, all distinctions and differences are unreal.

Countering Derrida's position, Śaṅkara also claims that the postmodernist seems to suggest that trace exists, that is, comes to presence. In order to clarify his position and respond to such

assertions, Derrida declares that 'The trace is not a presence but is rather the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself.'[57] Moreover, the trace does not exist in and of itself.[58] The trace can neither exist itself nor become present because it is always overtaken by effacement, which makes the trace disappear. In fact, a trace can only be a trace if it is overtaken by effacement. If effacement did not belong to the very structure of trace, the latter would be a permanent substance.[59] In a sense, effacement establishes the trace by making it disappear in its appearing, changing place, and issuing forth from itself.

When we utter the term 'trace' it presents itself, although not as it is in itself, and it also dies away at the same time because it becomes effaced when it presents itself. By not presenting itself as such, trace shares this feature with différance.[60] Derrida goes even further by stating, '*The (pure) trace is différance*'.[61] Moreover, the present is a trace: 'It is a trace, and a trace of the effacement of a trace.'[62] Due to the nature of trace, its connection to presence, and how it effaces itself when presenting itself, it is impossible for there to be a realm of différance, whereas one could speak of achieving the realm or, more accurately, a state of Brahman.[63] In sharp contrast to Śaṅkara's position, the notion of différance in Derrida's philosophy plays a role of subverting every realm or state of being.

Although it might be stretching the point a bit, there is a sense in Śaṅkara's philosophy in which Brahman shares some similar negative features with the trace of Derrida. As sat (being),[64] Brahman, which alone is real, negates all empirical being. The mind and the senses like a normal thing in the world cannot know Brahman, since it is not an object of perception or of the mind. Thus it possesses an inherent unknowability by normal faculties or knowledge. As cit (consciousness), Brahman denies that it represents an agent of knowing; otherwise, it would become delimited by the knowable and knowledge and hence could not be infinite. Śaṅkara comments, 'So also it is never thought, not being an object of the mind, but is itself the thinker, being thought itself. Similarly it is never known, not being an object of the intellect, but is itself the knower, being intelligence itself.'[65] Since Brahman is also referred to positively as ānanda (bliss), it negates finitude because the only real value exists in

the non-dual reality.[66] We have also noted that the formula 'neti, neti' (not this, not that) indicates the ultimately indefinability of Brahman and the only legitimate way to indicate it. Śaṅkara explains, 'These two negative particles are for conveying all-inclusiveness through repetition so as to eliminate every specification whatsoever that may occur to us.'[67] This negative formula refers to something that possesses no distinguishing marks, like name, form, heterogeneity, species and qualities.[68]

THE FACE OF ALTERITY

When discussing Heidegger at the beginning of this chapter, we noted that he helps us to understand that we are beings-in-the-world with others. The importance and implications of being in the world with others and the nature of the other itself continues to be a concern of many postmodern thinkers. Maurice Blanchot, for instance, indicates the essence of the problem when he writes: 'In the relation of *myself to the Other*, the Other exceeds my grasp.'[69] What Blanchot suggests correctly is the radical otherness of the other which can be labelled alterity, a way of indicating the radical otherness that is encountered and the difficulty of understanding the nature of the other. Probably, no postmodern thinker has done more to help us grasp the character of the other than Emmanuel Levinas. In this section of the chapter, we will also consider the contribution to the discussion by Jacques Lacan and compare Levinas and Lacan with each other and with Śaṅkara.

Alterity, a radical heterogeneity of the other, is a positive, moral, and ethical force for Levinas because the egoist tendencies of the self are reconditioned when it is exposed to the alterity of the other. How is this possible? Levinas answers, '...we recognize the Other as resembling us, but exterior to us; the relationship with the other is a relationship with a Mystery. The other's entire being is constituted by its exteriority, or rather its alterity, for exteriority is a property of space and leads the subject back to itself through light.'[70] Even though the other appears as exterior to us, he/she is still our brother/sister and our neighbour. Within the context of my proximity to the other, I might substitute myself for the other, although 'the substitution of the one for the other does not signify the substitution of the

other for the one.'[71] Thereby, the self becomes more concerned for the other and tends to it first rather than, selfishly caring more for itself. For Śaṅkara, the other does not simply resemble us, but it is rather identical to us from the perspective of higher knowledge (para vidyā): 'I am one alone; No other than that [Brahman] is thought to be Mine. In like manner I do not belong to anything since I am free from attachment.'[72] Śaṅkara is stating that he is not related to the other and is totally free from all relations and attachments. The apparent difference and exteriority of the other is due to name and form for Śaṅkara, which are products of māyā (illusion).[73] Rather than a primordial unity with the other, Lacan stresses the subject's separation from the other by a barrier formed by language, which possesses the ability to objectify the other and allows us to create the other into anything that we desire.[74] In sharp contrast to Śaṅkara, another important implication of the other for the self, according to Levinas, is that the former is instrumental in the process of self-understanding by the latter, an aspect of the self/other relation that plays no role for Śaṅkara. For Levinas, this means that the self achieves true selfhood through its meeting, a dialogical relation to the other, whereas genuine selfhood is achieved by an intuitive realization of the true nature of the self for Śaṅkara. From Lacan's perspective, we do not achieve self-understanding by meeting the other, but we rather encounter a lack in the other.[75]

According to Śaṅkara, it is misguided to refer to the self as related to the other because the eternal Ātman is identical to the other. From the perspective of higher knowledge (jñāna), reality is singular. Since the all is one, there is no I or other, which also implies that there is no I only or only the other alone. When one differentiates between oneself and another or particularizes the other, Śaṅkara suggests that two things are possible: a decentring of the other and a separating of the other from the Ātman. Lacan agrees with Śaṅkara that a self is decentred in relation to the other.[76] In comparison to Śaṅkara, Levinas wants to protect the exteriority of the other against any kind of intuitive realization akin to enlightenment, like that thought necessary by Śaṅkara. Unlike Śaṅkara, Levinas perceives the origin of alterity in what he calls *illeity* (*il y a*, there is), lacking presence or absence akin to a pure trace that is irreducibly

non-phenomenal.[77] Lacan agrees essentially with Levinas that the other is already there when something emerges from the unconscious: 'The Other, the capital Other, is already there in every opening, however fleeting it may be, of the uncouscious.'[78]

The other in itself is not merely one's alter ego for Levinas; it is also what the subject is not because of the very nature of the alterity of the other, which even gives it priority over the subject. The other is mysterious: 'The other as other is not here an object that becomes ours or becomes us; to the contrary, it withdraws into its mystery.'[79] This mysterious aspect of the other is its alterity, which constitutes the essence of the other. From Śaṅkara's non-dualistic viewpoint, unity takes precedence over difference, as we noted in the previous chapter. Moreover, Śaṅkara traces the mysterious nature of the self to an inability to intuitively grasp the true nature of the self and its essential unity with the other.[80] In contrast to Levinas and Śaṅkara, Lacan suggests the mysterious nature of the other in a very different manner that deals with a tension between consciousness and the unconscious ~~in the~~ individual. This tension within the individual indicates that an unconscious other is forever lurking within a person. Because the unconscious is pre-ontological, this unconscious other does not really exist, being neither being nor non-being.[81]

From the perspective of Levinas, the absolutely other is the infinite, which is not a concept but rather otherness in a radical sense. To think of infinity suggests thinking more than one can think.[82] By thinking it, a person's thought cannot extinguish or exhaust it. In this sense infinity—an absolutely other—is an excess. The idea of infinity is also a desire: 'A thought that thinks more than it thinks is a desire.'[83] Moreover, by means of its own intentionality, infinity aims at what it cannot encompass. One does not have to go far to discover infinity because it is found in one's relationship with the other.[84] By this emphasis on radical alterity, the philosophy of Levinas suggests that he is concerned with that which overflows thinking or the unthinkable. It is important for him to stress that we not compromise the alterity of the other by thematizing it or interiorizing it. From Levinas' perspective, Śaṅkara compromises the alterity of the other because he interiorizes it by thinking that one only needs to look within oneself to find infinity.

From the viewpoint of Śaṅkara, there is no other that is infinite because the other is identical to our self from the standpoint of higher knowledge. For Śaṅkara, infinity is discovered within the self and not outside of it. Although both Śaṅkara and Levinas agree that the infinite represents an excess, Levinas is on the wrong path from Śaṅkara's perspective because the postmodernist is at the initial level of realization in which the self is separate from every other. Levinas and Lacan do not proceed to discover the relation and correlation between all things, and they fail to see the many as one.

Although it is true that one enters into relation with the other for Levinas, this relationship is not exactly a true relation because it is not possible to reduce the other to some kind of relationship. Since the other is beyond totality, possesses no place, and cannot be understood as a relation, the other is absolutely exterior to any totalizing intention of thought,[85] whereas Śaṅkara thinks that you are identical to the other.[86] By stressing the absolute alterity of the other, Levinas wants to indicate its singularity and exteriority in order to protect it from the representation and annulment of its alterity by the Same (*Même*), which tends to confine the other and its autonomy by thinking it.[87] It is wrong to compromise the exteriority of the other because it overflows language, although it does leave a trace of its alterity within language. From the perspective of Śaṅkara, Levinas represents an example of a force within nature that strives for differentiation, whereas he resembles a unifying force. Lacan disagrees with both Levinas and Śaṅkara because the beyond aspect of the other is located in the unconscious as the discourse of the other.[88]

According to Levinas, the other reveals himself or herself as a face with an overflowing nature that cannot be conceptualized. By freeing itself from the Same, the face of the other visits me, representing an ethical epiphany that identifies a being. Our encounter with the face of the other questions us and the world, in which we live and summons us to respond: '...the Other faces me and puts me in question and *obliges* me by his essence qua infinity.'[89] This ethical and questioning encounter is made possible by proximity, which is prior to any experience of the other: 'My responsibility for the other is precisely the non-difference of this difference—the proximity of the other.'[90] The face of the other that we encounter never fully arrives and yet is near, because it is actually a trace that possesses no specific origin and comes from the nebulous beyond:

The beyond from which a face comes signifies as a trace. A face is in the trace of the utterly bygone...For a face is the unique openness in which the signifyingness of the trans-cendent does not nullify the transcendence and make it enter into an immanent order; here on the contrary transcendence refuses immanence precisely as the ever *bygone* transcendence of the transcendent.[91]

It is impossible to fully grasp the nature of the face because it withdraws itself from us as we encounter it. In response to thinkers like Levinas, Śaṅkara states: 'Just as the reflection of a face is different from the face since it conforms to the mirror, so the face is [different] from the reflection since it does not conform to the mirror.'[92] Śaṅkara suggests that the difference between the face and its reflection is indicative of its existence in the realm of appearance, a lower form of reality compared to Brahman. If the other presents the possibility of self-understanding for Levinas and does not present a problem for Śaṅkara because the other and self are ultimately identical, the other conceived by Lacan is an obstacle because it instills itself between the subject and the objects of his/her desire. By insinuating itself this way, the other makes objects unstable and increases the insatiable nature of desire that finds it impossible to reach its constantly moving objective. The other, which is situated within language as its arena of action, finds itself frustrated. Thus the other of Lacan is as doomed as his conception of the ego, a victim caught between delusional wholeness and disintegration.

BEING AND ALTERITY

According to Derrida, to understand Being is 'to let be.' By this 'letting be,' Derrida understands that any grasp of Being involves the alterity of the other, which suggests that one can only be what one is not. Derrida writes, 'If Being is always to be let be, and if to think is to let Being be, then Being is indeed the other of thought.'[93] Even if one lets be Being, thought, and other, their sameness does not imply that they are identical. If

one thinks of Being, this does not mean that the other, if we recall that Being is not a category, becomes a part of the genre of Being. Moreover, the other is not reducible to my ego because the other can assert ego just as you do: 'The other, for me is an ego which I know to be in relation to me as to an other.'[94] Therefore, one's relationship to oneself is always within a system of interrelationships with others. Because of the fundamental and insuperable gap between them, the relation between the self and the other represents both the possibility and impossibility of self-identity. The difference between the self and other combines and separates identity and difference.[95]

In contrast, Śaṅkara gives this matter a different treatment because the other is what is objectively given to me. The other is distinct and stands opposed to me. In comparison the 'I' (*asmat*) is the knowing subject. If the other is given as an object of one's experience, it cannot be a subject because the 'I' cannot be presented objectively. This suggests that the other is the not-self. If one takes the 'I' to be an object, this is an erroneous notion because the not-self is superimposed upon the 'I'. By claiming that one is handsome, ugly, intelligent or stupid is merely to superimpose properties of the body or mind to the true 'I'.[96]

In our relationship with another for Derrida, the other is always exterior to me and can never become interiorized. As a perpetual outsider, the other is properly neither interior nor exterior. The other hovers around the margin—neither inside nor outside—assuming the guise of the wholly other, which cannot be conceived. If the other is on the margin, and if oneself is also on the edge, what holds this relationship together? As the alternative of presence and absence, différance holds us in relationship to whatever exceeds us. The relation to the other makes the other possible and also impossible as presence, sameness, and assured essence. This relation exceeds and overflows the present moment in the sense that the initial moment makes the other return to the same, whereas the second moment is no longer and never had been a present same.[97] The other disturbs and shows the system of the same, and it forces it to become open to a difference that it did not anticipate. The encounter with the other is neither a representation, nor limitation, nor conceptual relation. Why? 'The ego and the other do not permit themselves to be dominated or

made into totalities by a concept of relationship.'[98] This suggests that a concept, which presupposes a horizon in which it operates, cannot encompass the other.

For Śaṅkara, one can only be what one actually is—an Ātman. This absolute reality within each person that transcends time and space needs to be realized by the individual, a realization that occurs within oneself and not between oneself and another person or between a person and the world. The Ātman is not something with which one can enter into relationship, but it is rather what we can become or what we truly are in fact. If one can enter into relation only with something that is at a distance from us and stands opposite from us as an independent other, then one cannot encounter an Ātman as an other because it is what one is in reality.

According to Derrida, the other remains other in a relationship because it cannot be reduced to my ego: 'The egoity of the Other permits him to say "ego" as I do; and this is why he is Other, and not a stone, or a being without speech *in my real economy*.'[99] Does Derrida want to suggest, like Martin Buber, that we can attain true selfhood in relationship to others? The answer is negative because: 'The trace is the erasure of selfhood, of one's own presence, and is constituted by the threat or anguish of its irremediable disappearance, of the disappearance of its disappearance.'[100] As Gasché interprets the subject in his work on Derrida, otherness is more and less than negativity because it is more than negativity due to the medium used by philosophy to construct its contradictions, and it is less than negativity because it possesses no meaning.[101]

With relation to the Ātman in Śaṅkara's philosophy, true selfhood cannot be erased because the Ātman is beyond trace and all relations, which can only be external to the Ātman or are superimposed on it. Beings that are in relation to other beings are not beings in themselves because the nature of beings in relation is determined by something else and making them dependent on that something. Moreover, only that which is subject to change can enter into relation with another. There cannot be relation of the Ātman with another because it is not subject to change.[102] Since Śaṅkara views the self as unrelated and relation as a hindrance to true selfhood, it is incumbent upon one searching for their true selfhood to erase the superimposed

relations upon the Ātman by means of genuine knowledge. From the perspective of higher knowledge for Śaṅkara, there is no other because the other is really not different than oneself.

In reply to philosophers like Śaṅkara, Derrida thinks that the philosophical position that the Advaitist thinker represents turns the ego and other into totalities, which he thinks is not possible. For Derrida, the encounter with the absolutely other is 'Neither representation, nor limitation, nor conceptual relation to the same.'[103] From Derrida's perspective, Śaṅkara also misses a double alterity: 'The alterity of the transcendent thing, although already irreducible, is such only by means of the indefinite incompleteness of my original perceptions. Thus it is incomparable to the alterity of Other, which is also irreducible, and adds to the dimension of incompleteness... But without the first alterity, the alterity of bodies (and the Other is also a body, from the beginning), the second alterity could never emerge.'[104] Since the second alterity is inscribed in the first, this double alterity must be thought together, giving forth a double indefiniteness that would be unacceptable to Śaṅkara. Moreover, presence or absence cannot conceptualize the otherness that is discussed by Derrida. Nonetheless, Śaṅkara and Derrida attempt to think the impossible from their very different philosophical positions.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We began this chapter with a long, introductory, hermeneutical dialogue between Heidegger, a thinker with a profound influence upon many postmodern philosophers, and Radhakrishnan, possibly the most influential Indian philosopher of the twentieth century. We noted essential agreement between them about the primacy of Being, that we are beings-in-the-world, that we encounter Being within the world with others, and that non-being is dependent on Being. We also noted some important differences between Heidegger and Radhakrishnan. We observed that the latter equates Being with God or ultimate reality, and that he equates Being with consciousness and absolute freedom. We saw that Heidegger combines ontology with alterity. Heidegger thinks that being and non-being are intertwined, whereas Radhakrishnan views them as being in opposition.

In the comparison of Levinas with Rāmānuja, Abhinavagupta, and Madhva on the topic of ontology, we noticed that Levinas describes Being as non-specific, anonymous, or alien whereas the three Indian thinkers equate Being with God. Ahinavagupta agrees with Levinas that consciousness forms the hypostasis of Being, and it possesses the ability to enable a being to recognize its Being. Since a conscious existent is aware of itself as existing for both parties, they agree that consciousness represents a self-luminous process. The two sides disagree, however, over Levinas' assertion that Being is a burden and over his notion of the weariness of existence due to this burden. The two dialogical partners agree about the presence of Being, and Abhinavagupta agrees further with Levinas that Being is a projecting forth.

When we turn to a comparison of Derrida and Śaṅkara we find much less agreement between the dialogical participants. For Śaṅkara, Being represents presence, whereas Derrida calls the presence of Being into question because his neologism différance is not a being-present; in fact, it does not exist within the category of being, and its movement represents the play of traces, which effaces itself in presenting itself and is thus lacking in presence. Derrida's position seems similar to what Śaṅkara understands by superimposition, an erroneous attribution of qualities or memory traces remembered from prior experiences that have the status of appearances for the Indian Advaita Vedāntist. Within the context of his writings on the subject, Derrida seems to suggest that traces exist or come to presence at least briefly, which he denies because of the workings of effacement. In order to protect himself from criticism that might be levelled against him by someone like Śaṅkara, Derrida unequivocally asserts that presence itself is a trace. From Derrida's perspective, différance plays the role of subverting every realm or state of being. Even though the differences are considerable between Śaṅkara and Derrida, the Vedāntist understanding of Brahman shares some negative features with the notion of trace in Derrida's thought because Brahman negates all empirical being, it possesses inherent unknowability because it cannot be known by the mind or senses, it does not represent an agent of knowing, it is indefinable, and it lacks any distinguishing marks.

Within the hermeneutical dialogue between Levinas, Lacan, and Śaṅkara on the topic of alterity, the postmodernists tend to emphasize the radical alterity of the other, whereas Śaṅkara thinks that one is in a primordial unity with the other. While Levinas, for instance, argues that the other is radically heterogeneous and is exterior to us, Śaṅkara thinks that the exteriority of the other is due to name and form, and Lacan claims that the subject is separate from the other by a barrier formed by language. For Levinas, the other is instrumental in the process of self-understanding of the self, but in the philosophy of Śaṅkara, the other plays no role because true selfhood is achieved through an intuitive realization of the true nature of the self (Ātman). Moreover, if Levinas thinks that true selfhood is achieved through our encounter with the other, Lacan also disagrees with him because Lacan is convinced that we do not achieve self-understanding by any encounter with the other. In fact, Lacan and Śaṅkara agree that the self is decentred in any relationship to the other. Levinas emphasizes the mysterious nature of the other, and Lacan agrees with Levinas to the extent of tracing the mysterious nature of the other to the tension between consciousness and unconsciousness within the individual. From the perspective of Lacan, a phantom unconscious other is lurking within a person. Śaṅkara does not share this emphasis on difference by Lacan and Levinas because he thinks that unity takes precedence over difference. The stress on difference in Levinas' thought is especially evident in his discussion of Infinity, an absolutely other. This radical other is an excess because it cannot be thought, whereas the other, for Śaṅkara, is identical to the self from the perspective of higher knowledge and infinity is discovered within the self. The strong ethical slant of Levinas' work is evident in his notion of the face, which represents an ethical epiphany that asks for a response from us. The face of the other, for Levinas, is near, but it never fully arrives, whereas the face, according to Śaṅkara, exists in the realm of appearance, a lower form of reality. For Lacan, the face of the other does not have the ethical significance that it does for Levinas because Lacan thinks that the other is an obstacle, which he traces to its insinuation of itself between the subject and its objects of desire.

Finally, the hermeneutical dialogue between Śaṅkara and Derrida on the topic of alterity finds the two thinkers agreeing that the other is distinct and stands opposite to me. If the other represents the not-self for Śaṅkara, the other is always exterior to me and can never be interiorized as it can be for Śaṅkara from the perspective of Derrida. According to Derrida, the other is neither interior nor exterior, and its relationship is held together by différance, which suggests that it must be marginal. Derrida thinks that the other is both possible and impossible as presence and sameness. From Śaṅara's perspective, the Ātman is what one is already, and it is not something with which one must enter into relationship. Derrida replies to Śaṅkara that the other cannot be reduced to my ego or eternal self because the other always remains other. Thus, for Derrida, we attain an indefinite and marginal kind of selfhood in relationship to others. From the perspective of Śaṅkara, true selfhood cannot be erased because the Ātman is beyond trace and relations. Śaṅkara claims that beings in relation are dependent on something else and subject to change, whereas the Ātman cannot be in relation to another because of its nature and the fact that relations are something superimposed on the Ātman. Śaṅkara asserts that the self is unrelated and that relation is a hindrance to true selfhood, whereas Derrida's response to thinkers like Śaṅkara is that they turn the ego and other into totalities. From Derrida's perspective, Śaṅkara misses the double alterity: an alterity of bodies and that of a transcendent thing, which results in a double indefiniteness.

As we have already noted, everything, is subject to the claim of the principle of ground according to Heidegger. This assertion about the principle of ground needs to be further examined in relation to rationality in the next chapter because the postmodern emphasis on the other possesses the potential to undermine the rational subject. Another potential danger to rationality is Derrida's neologism—différance—which is not a being present and never presents itself as present, because it does not give the subject anything to unify. Moreover, if one investigates the meaning of rationality within the context of the Derridean notion of trace, the term 'rationality' is effaced and disappears at the moment of its becoming, which results in a total relativization of rationality. We now need to turn to a consideration of rationality within the context or our hermeneutical dialogue.

ENDNOTES

1. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 31. Robert Nozick has a problem with the question of why there is something rather than nothing. Nozick observes: 'The question appears impossible to answer. Any factor introduced to explain why there is something will itself be part of the something to be explained, so it (or anything utilizing it) could not explain all of the something—it could not explain why there is *anything* at all' (p. 115) in *Philosophical Explanations*.

2. Heidegger's method of phenomenology is to be defined in its most radical sense as *legein ta phainomena*, where *legein* has the sense of *deloun* (to make clear), or, more precisely, *apophainesthai* (to permit something to appear of itself) and *phainomena* means that which shows itself as it is. Thus the radical sense of phenomenology means *apophainesthai ta phainomena:* to permit that which of its own accord manifests itself to reveal itself as it is. Since the phenomenon to be examined is *Dasein*, the whole sense of the existential analysis of *Sein und Zeit* becomes: to let *Dasein* reveal itself in what and how it is, that is, to be (manifest as) its self, in *Being and Time*, pp. 51–63. See also William J. Richardson, S. J., *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963), p. 46. Stanley Rosen finds Heidegger's assertion that we have forgotten Being problematic: 'I find an ambiguity in this thesis, since it is never clear whether Plato's "fall" was necessitated by the veiling-over of Being through beings, or whether this fall might not have been averted through adherence to the doctrines of the pre-Socratic thinkers' (pp. 181–2) in *The Question of Being: A Reversal of Heidegger* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993).

3. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 79. In contrast to Heidegger's philosophy, Levinas wants to emphasize the role of the other, and he proposes a different kind of transcendence: 'Transcendence is passing over to being's *other*, otherwise than being. Not *to be otherwise*, but *otherwise than being*' (p. 3) in *Otherwise Than Being*. Levinas also wants to protect the irreducibility of otherness in order to avoid what he thinks is the danger of an ontological monism. This threat can be replaced by a pluralism of otherness.

4. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 82. Heidegger understands *Dasein* as the process of finite transcendence whose ultimate meaning is time. Pierre Thevenaz writes, 'The essential originality of Heidegger's transcendentalism in relation to that of his master Husserl is its attempted resolution of the problem of the foundation without recourse to consciousness, not even transcendental consciousness, which was no doubt still too "idealist", too "subjectivist" in his eyes,' (p. 57) in *What is Phenomenology?* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1962). By calling *Dasein* a 'process', Heidegger wishes to insist that it is not an entity (*Vorhandenes*), enclosed and already achieved, but it is rather a dynamic process already begun but still to-be-achieved. This process is called 'transcendence' because Heidegger understands by the comprehension of Being the process by which *Dasein* passes beyond (transcender) beings, itself included, unto Being, that is, seizes all beings (comprendre) in their Being.

5. Radhakrishnan, 'Fragments', p. 38.
6. Ibid., p. 57.
7. Ibid., pp. 57–8.
8. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 98.
9. Ibid., p. 155.
10. Ibid., p. 155.
11. Ibid., p. 158–9.
12. Ibid., p. 162.
13. Radhakrishnan, 'Fragments', p. 31.
14. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 102.
15. Heidegger, *Existence and Being*, trans. Werner Brock, Third Edition (London: Vision Press, Ltd., 1968), pp. 370, 372, 377.
16. Radhakrishnan, 'Fragments', p. 31.
17. Ibid., p. 57.
18. Ibid., p. 164.
19. Ibid., p. 165.
20. Ibid., p. 167.
21. Martin Heidegger, *Der Satz vom Grund* (Tübingen: Neske, 1971), p. 99.
22. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, p. 62.
23. Ibid., p. 62. Simply having Being is not enough to account for presence according to Levinas: 'Presence is only possible as a return of consciousness to itself, outside of sleeping and consciousness beginning with this emphasis of presence' in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, p. 156.
24. Radhakrishnan, *Idealist View of Life*, pp. 92–3.
25. Radhakrishnan, 'Fragments', p. 39.
26. Levinas, *Existence*, pp. 21–2.
27. Ibid., p. 23.
28. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, pp. 46–7.
29. Levinas, *Existence*, p. 83.
30. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, pp. 52–4.
31. Rāmānuja, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 1.1.10.
32. Madhva, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 1.3.13.
33. Madhva, *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 7.12, 7.19.
34. Abhinavagupta, *Gītārthasaṅgraha*, 17.27.
35. Abhinavagupta, *Tantrāloka*, 3.93. Mohanty denies that the subject

of and type of thinking associated with ontology is not Indian (p. 152). He is, however, critical of the Indian ontological tradition because the logical concept of *prāmāṇya* is insufficient for an ontology because one must be able to allow for the possibility that things can be presented as they are. In other words, the Indian philosophical tradition needs a theory of preconceptual perception (p. 150) in *Reason and Tradition in Indian thought.*

36. Maheśvarānanda, *La Mahārthamanjarī de Maheśvarānanda,* trans. L. Silburn, Publications de l'Institut de Civilization Indienne 29 (Paris: Éditions E. de Boccard, 1968), p. 55.

37. Rāmānuja, *Vedānta Sūtras,* 1.1.1.

38. Ibid., 2.2.30.

39. Madhva, *Vedānta Sūtras,* 2.3.9.

40. Ibid., 2.1.8.

41. Madhva, *Bhagavad-Gītā,* 2.16.

42. Dyczkowski, p. 121.

43. Maheśvarānanda, p. 33.

44. Levinas, *Existence,* p. 25.

45. Ibid., p. 27.

46. Ibid., p. 30.

47. Ibid., p. 35.

48. Ibid., p. 76.

49. Ibid., p. 39.

50. Śaṅkara, *Vedānta Sūtras,* 2.3.7. According to Mohanty's interpretation of the Advaita Vedānta tradition, any existential judgement presupposes the self that manifests Being as the basis of its possibility. Moreover, by asserting that something exists, the Vedāntist is claiming that its existence represents the nature of Brahman to the extent of being limited by the content of it (p. 161) in *Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought.*

51. For a discussion of the path, see Deutsch, *Advaita Vedānta* pp. 106–9. Based on Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras* (2.2.17), Mohanty thinks that there is a priority given to substance in his ontology (p. 162) in *Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought.*

52. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena,* p. 153.

53. Ibid., p. 134.

54. Śaṅkara, *Vedānta Sūtras,* 1.3.7.

55. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena,* p. 154.

56. Śaṅkara, *Vedānta Sūtras,* 1.1.1, 3.3.9.

57. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena,* p. 156.

58. Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* p. 167.

59. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena,* p. 156.

60. Ibid., p. 154.

61. Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* p. 62.

62. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena,* p. 156.

63. Śaṅkara, *Vedānta Sūtras,* 1.1.4.

64. Mohanty makes clear the range of meaning for the term *sat*: 'While it retains the ontological and valuationally neutral meaning of *astit,* it goes beyond that in its connotation so that besides meaning being, existing, occurring, happening, present, living, and enduring, it also came to mean the true, the good, and the right' (p. 153). Mohanty goes on to make clear that sat is a real universal in comparison to the term astit (p. 155) in *Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought.*

65. Śaṅkara, *Vedānta Sūtras,* 2.3.9.

66. Śaṅkara, *Commentary on Kena Upaniṣad,* 1.3.

67. Śaṅkara, *Commentary on Taittirīya Upaniṣad,* 2.1.

68. Ibid., 2.1.

69. Blanchot, *Writing of Disaster,* p. 19.

70. Levinas, *Time and the Other,* p. 76. Earlier in the text, Levinas defines light by stating that 'Light is that through which something is other than myself, but already as if it came from me' (p. 64). In Martin Heidegger's early work, Dasein (there-being) is itself the lighting process (*Lichtung*), a term that also embodies the notion of a clearing or an opening within a forest. Without its luminosity, Dasein would be something else and not what it is because it would not be able to disclose itself. For Heidegger, there is a close relationship between the luminosity of Dasein and the disclosedness of the world that constitutes Dasein's being-in-the-world. Moreover, the disclosedness of the world is also the lighting up of Being (*Being and Time,* p. 171). In Heidegger's later works, it is language, as an event (Ereignis), that gives one the 'possibility of standing in the openness of the existent' (p. 287) in 'Holderlin and the Essence of Poetry,' trans. Douglas Scott in *Existence and Being,* ed. Werner Brock (Chicago: Regnery, 1949).

71. Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being,* p. 158. Ricoeur objects to Levinas' notion of externality because he thinks that the third modality of otherness is being enjoined. Ricoeur explains, 'To Levinas, I shall object that the injunction is primordially attestation, or the injunction risks not being heard and the self not being affected in the mode of being-enjoined' (p. 355) in *Oneself as Another.*

72. Śaṅkara, *Upadeśasāhasrī,* 1.8.4.

73. Śaṅkara, *Vedānta Sūtras,* 3.2.25.

74. Lacan, *Seminar II,* p. 244.

75. Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts,* p. 214.

76. Lacan, *Seminar II,* p. 9.

77. Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being,* p. 150.

78. Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts,* p. 130.

79. Levinas, *Time and the Other,* p. 86.

80. Śaṅkara, *Vedānta Sūtras,* 1.3.19.

81. Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, pp. 29–30.
82. Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, p. 54. Derrida criticizes Levinas: 'If one thinks, as Levinas does, that positive Infinity tolerates, or even requires, infinite alterity, then one must renounce all language, and first of all the words of *infinite* and *other*' (p. 114, *Writing and Difference*). Levinas does not aim at the destruction of language, but seeks to affirm the alterity of the other and emphasize that language possesses no limits. On these points, see Krzysztof Ziarek, 'Semantics of Proximity: Language and the Other in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas', *Research in Phenomenology*, Vol. 19 (1989), pp. 218–20. Derrida also claims that Levinas cannot speak of the infinitely other without also affirming the Same (p. 126, *Writing and Difference*), a criticism that is not necessarily true.
83. Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, p. 56.
84. Ibid., p. 54.
85. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*.
86. Śaṅkara, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 3.2.34.
87. Ricoeur is critical of Levinas at this point because 'the identity of the Same is bound up with an ontology of totality that my own investigation has never assumed or even come across. It results that the self, not distinguished from the I, is not taken in the sense of the self-designation of a subject of discourse, action, narrative, or ethical commitment' (p. 335) in *Oneself as Another*.
88. Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 131.
89. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 207.
90. Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, p. 167.
91. Ibid., p. 103; see also *Otherwise Than Being*, p. 94 and 'The Trace of the Other,' trans. A. Lingis, in *Deconstruction in Context: Literature and Philosophy*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 356–7.
92. Śaṅkara, *Upadeśasāhasrī*, 1.18.31–2.
93. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 141.
94. Ibid., p. 126.
95. Mark C. Taylor, *Tears* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), p. 95.
96. Śaṅkara, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 1.1.1.
97. Derrida, *Psyché*, p. 174.
98. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 95.
99. Ibid., p. 125.
100. Ibid., p. 230.
101. Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror*, pp. 103–4.
102. Śaṅkara, *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 18.17.
103. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 95.
104. Ibid., p. 124.



Rationality and Madness

If the overall goal of Enlightenment philosophy in the West was freedom from myth, superstition, mysterious powers, and the forces of nature, this emancipation was to be effected through the use of critical reason, which urged rational beings to seek a fuller unification of knowledge. By means of a critical method, Kant attempted to get reason to critique itself in the sense of determining its own limits and to develop rational rules by which to adhere to these restrictions. Kant distinguishes reason (*Vernunft*) from understanding (*Verstand*) and sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*). He distinguishes theoretical—which determines or constitutes the object given in intuition and applies categories to the data of sense intuition—from practical reason, in which reason functions as the source of its objects in order to determine its moral choices in accordance with a law that originates from itself. By relying solely on concepts gained by such knowledge based on principles (*Erkenntnis aus Prinzipien*), one can apprehend the particular contained in the universal and the former can then be deduced from the latter, which indicates that knowledge gained through reason is very different from knowledge obtained by principles of understanding. But by accepting the concepts and judgments of the understanding, reason attempts to unify these multiple phenomena according to a higher principle. Thus reason seeks that which is unconditioned, something not given in

sense experience, and unity. Kant thinks that a transcendental unity is a condition of all knowing, although knowledge of things-in-themselves is not possible because knowledge is limited to the sphere of experience. The possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge, truths that can be known independently of experience, is only transcendentally possible by arguing from the categories of rationality, innate ideas or pure concepts of understanding. Not only is purely rational knowledge possible for Kant, but reason can lead human beings beyond experience and enables us to enter a realm of sense transcendent realities. If the law of reason as grasped by Kant requires us to seek unity, the possibility of heterogeneity suggests the potential for chaos for our rational mode of thinking in which our powers of reasoning would experience an uncontrollable dispersion. Not only does the law of reason require us to seek unity for Kant, but it also makes possible the coherent employment of the understanding.[1] Therefore, to be without reason implies to be devoid of unity, to risk becoming mad, and to be hopelessly at the mercy of the irrational.

Many of the postmodern thinkers that we have discussed thus far call into question in various ways the role of reason in Enlightenment philosophy. Sometimes, this challenge of reason takes the form of rescuing reason, or it can represent an embracing of the irrational. Lyotard, for instance, makes a distinction between a rationalist and a post-rationalist path by drawing out their political consequences. If the rationalist path suggests a desire to preserve existing rules that conform to the dictates of capitalism, the post-rationalist path leads to destabilization and the unbalancing of the structures needed for the performative functioning of knowledge, an example of power and capitalist rationalization. Loytard wants to save reason and to free it and knowledge, which is nothing more than a product to be sold, from the bondage of capitalist authorities. Lyotard attempts to take seriously Kant's notion of the *Streben* of reason, 'the zeal that pushes thinking beyond the limitation of infinitely deferred time.'[2] This involves trying to determine how the notion of time and the principle of relativity affect thinking. Time, which is the *différer* of thinking, is a challenge that thinking must assume in order for it to begin anew and to include anamnesis of its former elucidations. The kind of knowledge that Lyotard desires

'refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable.'[3] This type of knowledge becomes an end in itself and thus possesses utility. Although reason does not determine its content, it regains its practical use and obligates us by its own law in its practical function.[4] During the postmodern era, the notion of reason shifts toward a reason of the plural and it focuses on the indeterminate, the random, the irregular, and the formless.[5] Therefore, Lyotard's notion of reason is more radical and ambitious than that of Kant, and he denies that his line of thinking induces scepticism.

Lyotard wants to re-think the very nature of thinking in which no presentation of its nature becomes primary. Why is such an undertaking even necessary? Lyotard argues that the process of re-thinking is essential because whatever happens is merely a recurrence of something different.[6] This suggests that Lyotard wants to create a mode of thinking that is more in accord with the notion of time, which possesses the ability to remove the unthought, actively forgets former modes of thinking, and motivates thinking to begin anew. It is in this sense that time functions like a strong wind that blows away the clouds that obscure our attempt to discover a new mode of thinking. What we witness with respect to Lyotard's programme for philosophy is a demand that thinking must come to grips with the principle of relativity.[7] Many centuries ago the Nikāya Buddhism took this type of a demand earnestly.

Nikāya Buddhists agree with Lyotard about taking the notion of time seriously, and they share Lyotard's suspicion of reason, even though some scholars have called the historical Buddha a rationalist.[8] Nonetheless, Nikāya Buddhism did not make a distinction between a priori and empirical reasoning. Even though the Nikāya Buddhists used reason in debates with rivals, they thought that the soundness of reasoning was no guarantee of truth.[9] According to Hoffman, there was also no concern with formal logic because the principle of contradiction was lacking in a formal, logical sense, although it did function as a basic rule of debate.[10] Unlike Lyotard's attempt to rescue reason for practical purposes and to shift it toward the plural and irregular, Nikāya Buddhists did not have much confidence in the potential powers of reason, and they acknowledged its limitations like postmodern thinkers.

A good example of a postmodern thinker who recognizes the limits of reason is Bataille, who disputes the exalted claims made by rational philosophers for reason. Since the value of a person is not diminished by a lack of it, reason is denied a determining place as the primary and most valuable characteristic of a person or humanity as a whole. Bataille sees no need to construct rational thought.[11] The contemporary Indian philosopher, J. N. Mohanty disagrees because he thinks that a conception of rationality needs the following components: 'a theory of logic or of valid inference, an account of what should count as evidence for or against conclusions, a conception of what it is to know something, and a theory of action, specifically of moral action.'[12] Since reason is in complicity with the denial of collective thought for Bataille, it is, therefore, impossible for reason to provide a satisfactory framework for a revision of values. What is essential for Bataille is excessiveness and not rationality, a rather limited mode of thinking. Daya Krishna disagrees with Bataille about the issue of values because the contemporary Indian philosopher perceives an identity of the rational and values, although he does not think that value can be identified with reality on logical and empirical grounds or that a rational determination of values is possible.[13] Krishna argues in conclusion that value, which is both intrinsic and instrumental, transcends rationality and irrationality, whereas a postmodernist like Foucault calls the category of value into question and views knowledge in terms of power.

In several of his studies of western social practices, using either his method of archaeology or genealogy, Foucault indicates the exclusive nature of Enlightenment reason, which tends to legitimate itself by initially identifying and then stigmatizing the other. In his book on insanity in Europe, Foucault demonstrates, for instance, this tendency by showing how madness and the mad person represent unreason, a support of madness. During the eighteenth century in Europe, the houses of confinement hid madness and unreason, even though madness was manifestly evident in the empirical world. Foucault finds something paradoxical about this situation: 'Confinement hid away unreason, and betrayed the shame it aroused; but it explicitly drew attention to madness, pointed to it.'[14] This demonstrates the power of reason to be used as a weapon in the construction

of social normativity and the development of social conformity to the dominant social power. Moreover, madness also disrupts the unity of body and soul.[15] Not only does Foucault attempt to show how complexes of power-knowledge within history shape the subject of insanity, but he is also concerned to show the extremely complex ideological implications of rationality and to still insist that rationality lacks necessity. Foucault affirms that madness speaks reason and is itself the negation of reason. Nonetheless, the rational hold over madness is always possible and even necessary to the extent that madness is non-reason.[16] In contrast to Foucault's claim that reason is a means of control, Aurobindo thinks that it possesses the ability to transform itself when it reaches a certain stage of development 'into the form of the self-luminous intuitional knowledge.'[17] From Aurobindo's perspective, transcendence is built into the principle of reason itself in the sense that its aim and essence represents the seeking of knowledge and truth.

Besides the examples of the postmodern thought of Lyotard, Bataille, and Foucault, we have witnessed in the various hermeneutical dialogues of the preceding chapters direct or indirect instances of various postmodern thinkers questioning, undermining, or rejecting rationality for a variety of motivations. The emphasis on the impermanence of language and the understanding of the nature of a term means that rationality holds no privileged position in postmodern thought. In an example not previously cited, Foucault thinks that language is the initial and final structure of madness because the ultimate language of madness is reason.[18] And since writing means nothing and eventually leads one astray, rationality cannot be articulated in a meaningful way. In place of rationality, Deleuze and Guattari, for instance, advocate desire, which can produce reality, as a life-affirming power that is produced by schizophrenia, an anti-rational force, Within the context of discussing suffering, Kristeva identifies abjection as a form of suffering that disturbs identity and order, which is not suitable ground for the order craved by Kantian rationality, and the abject as a marginal being, suggesting a subject outside of the domain of rationality. Instead of the role being played by rationality, it is death that is revelatory and liberating for Bataille, Blanchot, and Derrida in Chapter 4. Generally speaking, some of the

postmodernists give us of a view of the self that is not conducive to the development of rationality. The self of Mark C. Taylor's conception is, for instance, without presence or secure identity, a marginal and liminal being. For Lacan, the self, a decentred subject, is alienated from itself and others. Not only does the self lack identity, it is also excentric, narcissistic, and lacks presence, which suggests that it is also a poor candidate for the development of any rational powers. The postmodern discussion of difference and identity tends to undermine unity, denies any unifying factor in life, and relativizes God or the absolute. This mode of thought denies any transcendental ground for rationality. There is also no ontological basis for rationality because several postmodern thinkers inform us that being is anonymous, a burden, and lacks presence. Since there is a further lack in the other, the notion of ontology and alterity do not secure any stable ground for rationality. If we combine all these observations with the tendency of many postmodernists to stress heterogeneity, excess, and relativity, it is no wonder that there is a strong scepticism to be discovered within postmodern modes of thinking and little place for reason, with the possible exception of a very limited role for rationality. We will also have to investigate what this means for a representational mode of thinking. In summary, the previous chapters lead ultimately to this chapter on rationality in which we will continue the hermeneutical dialogue with selected Indian thinkers. We will engage Heidegger and Derrida in dialogue with Śaṅkara, Levinas and Radhakrishnan, and Kristeva and Taylor with Radhakrishnan.

THE PRINCIPLE OF REASON

Since Derrida appears to follow the lead of Heidegger when considering the principle of reason and reacts against his work, we will consider the latter German philosopher before we turn to the French deconstructionist on his treatment of the topic of reason. Even though the principle of reason is the most enigmatic of imaginable principles, Heidegger thinks that when we seek the origin of something we find ourselves on the path to reason. The principle of reason must not be confused with a personal assessment or a rule because it is something necessary, a fundamental principle (*Satz*).[19] This basic principle presupposes that the nature of reason was already previously determined. Even if one discovered the principle of reason for oneself, it would not teach you anything directly about the essence of reason.

The principle of reason does, however, inform us that it represents the ground for the essence of language.[20] Heidegger also thinks that the principle of reason is connected to being. In fact, the principle of reason utters being in a concealed way.[21] Nonetheless, reason, a ground for language, is removed from being because being, which forms the ground of the principle of reason and remains groundless itself, represents an abyss in the sense that it remains apart from reason. Although individual beings are included within the realm of the principle of reason, Being itself is outside of this orbit.[22] Heidegger refers to the principle of reason as a leap: 'The principle of reason is a principle in the distinguished sense, that is, as a leap.'[23] This means, for Heidegger, that in order to reach the path of the principle of reason one must be prepared to take a leap. Ultimately, Heidegger sees a unison between being and reason, a position that sets the stage for Derrida's contribution to the discussion.

Derrida thinks that the principle of reason is not simply reason itself. Derrida wants to investigate what is prior to reason or even thinking. Derrida is motivated by what he perceives to be an opacity embodied within the system of rationality. Since the supplementary possibility of reason is not reducible to logic, it is not conceivable to reason. In other words, the very possibility of reason cannot be grasped intellectually in accordance with patterns of rational necessity. But why is this the case? Derrida answers, 'The supplement can only respond to the non-logical logic of a game. That game is the play of the world.'[24] The supplementary nature of reason suggests that the origin of reason must be non-rational, a position that does not take the 'non' as a logical negation. This stance does not mean that Derrida is attempting to overcome the Kantian or modern notion of reason, but rather that he is trying to reach the basic general structures of thinking that ground all transformations of thought.[25] Derrida does think, however, that the Enlightenment conception of reason tends to be self-legitimizing because it takes one

historically and culturally specific notion of reason as its universal standard for all forms of reason, using this single standard in order to judge all competing examples of reason as unreasonable.[26] This type of exclusivistic rationalism that tends to dominate and demand social conformity is anathema to Derrida. Referring to Heidegger's work, *Der Satz vom Grund* and his naming of the call of the principle of reason *Anspruch* (requirement, claim, request, demand, command, convocation), Derrida writes that we have a responsibility to respond to the call of the principle of reason. He elucidates what he means by this response: 'To respond to the call of the principle of reason is to "render reason", to explain effects through their causes, rationally; it is also to ground, to justify, to account for on the basis of principles or roots. Keeping in mind that Leibnizian moment whose originality should not be underestimated, the response to the call of the principle of reason is thus a response to the Aristotelian requirements, those of metaphysics, of primary philosophy, of the search for "roots", "principles", and "causes".[27] Although he approvingly cites the two principles of reason (i.e., the principle of non-contradiction and the principle of rendering a reason for any true proposition) from the work of Leibniz, Derrida wants to know if we are obeying the principle of reason by seeking its ground, and are we caught in a circle or an abyss? He answers paradoxically that we are not obeying the call of the principle of reason by trying to ascertain its ground, which is itself a principle of grounding, and we are not also disobeying it. In order to answer the second question about the circle, we would have to attempt to account for reason by reason, or to make sense of the abyss by attempting to account for the impossibility of a 'principle of grounding to ground itself.'[28] From the perspective of Derrida, the position of Heidegger manifests some internal contradictions because the German philosopher is asking us to account for the principle of reason by using reason and to determine if the reason for reason is a rational process. This is a good example of Derrida using another philosopher's words against him/her. Moreover, the origin of reason is something that is itself added to reason and incommensurate with it, forming a supplement to reason. The origin of reason, a supplement, is exterior and unnecessary to reason, although it is paradoxically

that without which reason is what it is. Due to its inability to think the supplement reason lacks power; it is better grasped as a principle of identity.[29]

The dominance of the modern notion of the principle of reason is linked with turning beings into objects for Derrida that are present as representations. The subject that says 'I' and assures itself of its own present existence guarantees this dominance. Thus, the subject grants itself permanence at the expense of the other when in fact there is no such permanence for Derrida, which suggests that we cannot encounter the principle of reason and interrogate, investigate, and scrutinize its origin due to its impermanence. According to Derrida, what Heidegger does recall for us and calls on us to think about is that reason cannot be divorced from its context: 'the very idea of technology in the realm of their modernity.'[30] Derrida concludes that reason is merely one species of thought. But this does not mean that thought is irrational.[31]

In comparison to Heidegger, Śaṅkara does not think that reason (*tarka, yukti*) is a necessary and fundamental principle because it is subordinate to the Vedas or revealed scripture (śruti), which possesses unconditional validity and absolute authority. Without the guiding light of the Vedas, reason is groundless and helpless, although it is not entirely useless for Śaṅkara because the process of reasoning can be utilized in philosophical argument against the philosophical errors of other schools of thought and to eliminate incorrect interpretations of scripture.[32] Nonetheless, reason is only considered valid if it accords with scripture. Halbfass elucidates Śaṅkara's position: '...Śaṅkara sees legitimate reasoning itself within the horizon of revelation, as something not independent in its "rationality", but received and revealed as a pedagogical device and as a means of explication.'[33] Thus Śaṅkara is not simply rejecting reason, and he does not intend to advocate an anti-rational position or an irrational intuitionism. Since reason is not completely self-sufficient and can lead to conflicting results, it is necessary for it to be guided by revelation for it to possess any genuine utility. Unaided reason manifests a tendency to become entangled, confused, contradictory, and cannot guarantee reliable knowledge, even though it can also help to develop cleverness and limited usefulness. Due to its inherent shortcomings,

reason cannot serve as the foundation for a metaphysics. Reason and the exercise of rationality must serve revelation, the suprarational. Śaṅkara also disagrees with Heidegger about the German philosopher's contention that reason is connected to Being. And the primary sense of leap for Śaṅkara is to a state of liberation (mokṣa) and not a leap of reason.

If we compare the philosophical position of Śaṅkara with that of Derrida, we find the Indian thinker in sympathetic agreement with the spirit of the postmodernist's position. Śaṅkara, for instance, agrees with Derrida about the limitations of reason and its impermanent nature. Both philosophers are opposed to hypothetical or speculative reasoning. Śaṅkara also agrees with Derrida about the supplemental nature of reason (to use the deconstructionist's language) because the Vedāntist does not accord reason any independent status, although it is not likely that the Advaita Vedāntist would agree with Derrida that the origin of reason is non-rational. Reason is not, for instance, able to lead one independently to knowledge of Brahman (*brahmajñāna*) or any definitive and conclusive knowledge for Śaṅkara.[34] If reason and the self are in a constant state of flux according to Derrida, the postmodernist cannot explain from the perspective of Śaṅkara how a brief act of perception can be retained by memory. Śaṅkara makes it clear that a given perceiver possesses memory. There is no confusion about the identity of the entity that possesses the memory because it is the permanent self that does not pass away from Śaṅkara's philosophical perspective.[35] In contrast to Derrida's desire to examine what is prior to reason, Śaṅkara calls what is prior to reason śruti, revelation or sacred scripture. And rather than a call of the principle of reason to which one must respond as in Derrida, Śaṅkara's work suggests that there is an internal call to seek enlightenment and freedom from suffering.

Derrida and Śaṅkara also manifest differences of opinion about the validity of knowledge, subjectivity, and intuition. By accepting the validity of śruti (revelation) as propositional truths to serve as the ground for his philosophy, Śaṅkara begins to engage in philosophical argumentation from a position of validity rather than using something like Cartesian doubt as his starting point or the radical scepticism of Derrida. By taking such a position, Śaṅkara can claim that all knowledge is self-valid,

which implies that truth is intrinsically tied to knowledge (jñāna) so long as it does not contradict śruti. An invalid argument or error is extrinsic to knowledge, which motivates us to seek an explanation about why this might be the case.[36] Moreover, if subjectivity refers to personal experience of an intuitive kind, both Śaṅkara and Derrida cannot be accused of it because for the former a person's own thought and experience are not as authoritative as śruti and the latter never argues for certainty. Śaṅkara does, however, suggest that a person's thought and experience can be valid and authoritative if it does not conflict with or contradict śruti (revelation). Although each person enjoys a certain amount of autonomy for Śaṅkara, he is not advocating the same kind of subjectivism and individualism that one finds in the philosophy of Descartes, for instance. Furthermore, Śaṅkara and Derrida disagree about the role of intuition. If intuition can offer a person an insight into the nature of reality for Śaṅkara, it is a theory-laden hypothesis about vision and perception for Derrida that is dependent upon many presuppositions and conventions about perception. The problem with intuition is nicely illustrated by Derrida in his examination of the self-portrait by an artist that is split into three parts: artist; model; and spectator. These three aspects of the painting—the eye of the artist, the dead eye in the mirror, and the eye of the witness seeing himself seen—are divided by an abyss. At the precise moment that the artist tries to see himself seeing, the visual intuition slips away.[37] Therefore, intuition is not something that Derrida thinks we can trust.

REASON AND SCEPTICISM

Levinas understands reason in terms of his conceptualization of intersubjectivity and interrelationship. He defines the fundamental structure of reason in the following way: 'Reason is the one-for-the-other.'[38] Levinas is not that concerned with the theoretical relation of reason of one person to another, but he is more concerned with the function of reason in a moral relationship. Thus we find reason in a relationship between one and the other. According to Levinas, 'Reason consists in ensuring the coexistence of these terms, the coherence of the one and the other despite their difference, in the unity of a theme; it ensures

the agreement of the different terms without breaking up the present in which the theme is held.'[39] The difference between myself and the other does not preclude reason or communication. This relationship to the other is prior to all knowledge, which represents a form of appropriation and domination. From Levinas' perspective, knowledge is a form of autonomy. This does not mean that the rational is something in opposition to the experience of the other. Although it is not an a priori form of reason, the experience of the other is reason itself.[40]

Levinas' philosophy suggests that rational activity takes place within the context of communication. He makes a distinction between the Said (*le dit*), a structurally coherent text created by language, and Saying (*le dire*), a primordially non-thematic emergence of communication. The Said represents the realm of ontology and a dimension of things that are objectifiable, whereas the Saying precedes and cannot coincide with any Said and breaks the limits of philosophical language. Saying is not consciousness or equivalent to thinking, but it is rather to be understood as the horizon of sociality and a unique form of intentionality due to its lack of a noetic-noematic structure, which implies that it occurs when it is performed. By means of Saying, one speaks to someone and encounters their face.

By encountering and welcoming the face of the other for Levinas, one opens oneself to reason.[41] A person is not only open to reason, but one also receives an ethical epiphany that identifies a being and calls upon one to react to its questions. The encounter with the face of the other, which is made possible by one's pre-given proximity and which is prior to any experience or encounter with the other, is a way by which the other reveals him/herself with a non-conceptualized nature. The face of the other represents its human otherness, its demand upon me, its occupying of me, and its calling of me to responsibility, an election for Levinas that I cannot refuse. Not only does the face of the other open one to reason, but the idea of infinity is called the work of reason by Levinas.[42]

In a posthumously published work entitled *Entre Nous: Thinking-of-the-Other,* Levinas calls for an end to the representational mode of thinking, which once guaranteed contact with the real. The representational mode of thinking, which binds together being and consciousness with presence and representation, assumes a correspondence between appearance and reality and is supported by a metaphysical edifice. Levinas elucidates the results of a representational type of thinking in the following way: 'The correlative of representation is a solid, fixed being, indifferent to the appearance it presents, endowed with a nature and consequently eternal, even if it changes, for the formula of its change is immutable.'[43] Levinas calls attention to Husserlian phenomenology that demonstrated that thought is an experience of being or presence in the world, but Levinas wants to return from the world to *Erlebnis,* a pre-reflective experience of the ego. At this pre-reflective level of experience, one's relation to the other is not disrupted from its primordiality. Once a subject encounters the other, the other tears the ego from its pre-reflective experience and splits the unity of consciousness, turning presence into a durational event. The time of consciousness associated with representation renders synchrony more powerful than diachrony, which further enhances representation.[44] According to Levinas, knowledge based on Enlightenment philosophy betrays us because being and consciousness are in bondage to presence and representation, which is equivalent to asserting that they are bound to the same. If Hegel's philosophy defines the rational as a synchronization of the historical into a unity of presence, being and world, Levinas perceives a change: 'Rationality consists in being able to pass from *Representation* to the *Concept,* which is no longer a modality of *Representation.*'[45] The philosophies of Śaṅkara and Radhakrishnan are also examples of two thinkers attempting to break from the representational mode of thinking. For Śaṅkara and Radhakrishnan, the representational mode of thinking is limited to sense experience, which is a lower form of knowledge that is captive to difference and duality instead of what it is for Levinas.

In contrast to Levinas, Radhakrishnan also views the nature and role of reason much differently than the interrelational, communicative, and ethical way of Levinas. Radhakrishnan, as a representative and interpreter of the Hindu viewpoint, states that there is no mistrust of reason in Hindu thought. Moreover, there is no contradiction in the human mind between its two powers—reason and intuition.[46] With respect to Levinas' interrelational and intersubjective concept of reason, he can counter

Radhakrishnan by asserting that the acceptance of the theory of karma inhibits rational freedom. Radhakrishnan anticipates such criticism:

The theory of karma allows man the freedom to use the material in the light of his knowledge. Man controls the uniformity in nature, his own mind and society. There is thus scope for genuine rational freedom, while determinism and chance lead to a false fatalism.[47]

Moreover, Radhakrishnan thinks that reason and sense knowledge are both grounded in intuition, a philosophical position that sharply distinguishes his stance from that of Levinas. Radhakrishnan thinks that reason is subordinate to intuition, an experience that possesses certitude and transcends reason. There is no other experience—sensual or mental—that can disturb the certainty of intuition.[48] The infallibility of intuition is partly related to its directness, immediacy, and completeness. Radhakrishnan elaborates further:

Intuitive knowledge is a self-subsistent mode of consciousness different from the intellectual or the perceptual. Whereas perception gives us the outward properties of an object, and intellect discerns the law of which the object is an instance, intuition gives depth, meaning, character to the object.[49]

Although intuition possesses certainty, it lacks conceptual clarity that is supplied by reason. And even though intuition is infallible, it uses the critical powers of reason to justify its validity. Thus intuition can be affirmed to be beyond reason, but it is not opposed to reason. Moreover, intuition, a basis for all thinking and origin of all discourse, does not contradict or deny logical reason, even though it transcends reason.[50] Unlike Hegel's claim that all our knowledge is mediated through concepts and previously shaped by our sensations, Radhakrishnan wants to assert that it is possible for some form of experience to be immediate and unmediated.

Radhakrishnan makes a distinction between two kinds of intuition: perceptual knowledge and integral insight.[51] And he refers to intuition, a non-sensuous and immediate knowledge, as integral experience in which one sees things as they are in truth because it represents 'an intimate fusion of mind with

reality.'[52] This type of knowing is devoid of sense perception; it is, however, characterized by being and identity. Radhakrishnan makes this clear; 'It is knowledge by being and not by senses or by symbols. It is awareness of the truth of things by identity.'[53] In other words, the knower creates an identity with that which becomes known, a non-dualistic mode of knowledge that is distinct from the dualism characteristic of rational knowledge. Radhakrishnan shares the spirit of his position with Bergson and his emphasis upon intuition as a means to grasp things in their wholeness and in time. And Radhakrishnan shares with Husserl the conviction that intuition is different and more specialized than any common notion of experience, and there are intuitions that are eidetic or can reveal necessary truths. And yet Radhakrishnan does not want to assert that this is a pure experience because layers of interpretation shape all personal experiences.[54] It is, however, a self-established, self-evident, self-luminous, and self-valid form of knowledge that is sufficient and complete in itself that requires no supportive argumentation or explanation.[55] Intuitive knowing is to be distinguished from mere imagination because it apprehends real things that are not dependent upon the senses. From Radhakrishnan's perspective, Levinas cannot ascend to Infinity as he claims because he does not make use of integral knowledge. The intuitive knowledge of Radhakrishnan is devoid of doubt for the experiencer, whereas Levinas grasps some limitations with respect to reason.

Reason is problematic for Levinas because of its tendency to encompass everything in a universal manner. When this occurs, reason discovers itself in solitude, which assumes the form of solipsism, a form of the very structure of reason.[56] This does not eventuate because of the subjective character of the sensations combined by reason, but it is due to the universality of knowledge based on reason. Solipsism does not disappear because of the intentional nature of consciousness that enables one to distinguish the ego from things. This is also true for objective knowledge: 'The objectivity of rational knowledge removes nothing of the solitary character of reason.'[57] From Levinas' perspective, the intuitive knowledge advocated by Radhakrishnan is another form of solipsism. Although Radhakrishnan does not agree with this assertion by Levinas, he does agree with Levinas about the limitations of reason.

because its knowledge is partial, fragmentary, and thus inadequate. However, Levinas and Radhakrishnan agree that intuition is not representation in any manner. They differ because Levinas connects intuition with duration, being, and the experience of being, whereas Radhakrishnan's notion of intuition transcends time, although it possesses being and profoundly experiences being.

Alongside the appearance of reason in representative knowing and the process of deduction that is supported by logic for Levinas, there appears scepticism, a refusal to synchronize the suggested affirmation located in the Saying and any negation that this affirmation claims in the Said. Scepticism does make a difference because it creates an interval between the Saying and the Said, and it witnesses the irreducible difference between them. This suggests that scepticism is refutable, but it always returns.[58] Scepticism will not acknowledge synchrony as the highest viewpoint and denies transcendental apperception because it represents diachronic thinking associated with the performance of doubt. If the synchronic nature of language is abstracted from its diachronous aspect, language loses its human significance, an undesirable occurrence that the notion of Saying is trying to restore for Levinas. Even though scepticism is self-contradictory because its apodictic denial of the truth presupposes that the sceptic is connected with the truth in some sense, its return indicates that it cannot be ultimately refuted. Due to its ability to ask radical and difficult questions, scepticism is a legitimate offspring of philosophy. Radhakrishnan disagrees with Levinas because a consistent form of scepticism is not possible. That this is a self-contradictory position is evident when the sceptic holds to the truth of his/her own position, while simultaneously doubting the possibility of knowledge. In an insightful observation, Radhakrishnan observes that scepticism 'thrives most in periods of transition.'[59] If we assume for the moment that postmodernism represents a period of transition in western philosophy and that Radhakrishnan is correct, the strong strain of scepticism in postmodern philosophy begins to make more sense. Moreover, the scepticism manifested by postmodern philosophers is indicative of the hollow victory of Descartes over philosophical scepticism because his victory was not final by any stretch of human imagination.

THE EMBRACE OF DIONYSUS

Friedrich Nietzsche's work entitled *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* begins with a prologue in which a prophet appears and speaks to the people assembled in the market square about the advent of the Superman, and the need to overcome man/woman. Although human beings have made considerable progress, they have a long way to go: 'You have made your way from worm to man, and much in you is still worm.'[60] The prophet continues by telling the people to remain true to the earth, and he warns them about believing in supernatural things. What is the prophet's motivation? Zarathustra says, 'Once blasphemy against God was the greatest blasphemy, but God died, and thereupon these blasphemes died too.'[61] The death of God changes many things, and the prophet goes on to question other things like reason. Along with contempt for one's happiness and virtues, the greatest experience that one can have is to also have contempt for reason. Through the prophet Zarathustra, Nietzsche intends to demonstrate the limits of reason and to deny the Cartesian notion of the possibility of total accessibility to rational inquiry.

According to Nietzsche, there is no sovereign rationality that governs earthly things, although there is a seed of reason to be discovered among things, which could develop into a new kind of wisdom. Even though products of thought are illusory, categories of thought do have utility in the sense that they are illusions necessary for life. From a negative perspective, these categories of thought function as instruments of control, a position with which Foucault and Deleuze agree. By claiming to provide knowledge of all things, reason becomes ruinous to a person because it cannot possibly permeate the whole. Thus reason is not only potentially hazardous to a person's well-being, but it is also unnecessary and impossible. Moreover, a major weakness of reason is that the rational intellect cannot grasp becoming, a major shortcoming from the perspective of several postmodern thinkers.

Nietzsche's work does not, however, represent a total rejection of reason, which can be witnessed in a symbolic way in his work. Besides what we have intimated thus far, Zarathustra's cave, for instance, is located high in the mountains, a place

much closer to the sun than is the valley of the community. This scene is symbolic of Nietzsche's rejection of the Platonic mythical opposition between Appollonian rationality and earthly existence connected to Dionysus because Zarathustra's home is built of both Apollonian and Dionysian elements. If Zarathustra's home is located high in a mountain, this signifies that it is close to the sun, a source of Apollonian insight, and its dark cave symbolizes the Dionysian powers of the earth, which is exactly where the philosopher wants to be for Nietzsche: 'The highest state a philosopher can attain: to stand in a Dionysian relationship to—formula for this is *amor fati.*'[62] And it is precisely this Dionysian relationship to existence that some postmodernists embrace in their work. Before we can grasp the motivation for this, we need to examine the opposition between the Apollonian and Dionysian elements in Nietzsche's thought.

The Greek god Apollo is a deity of sunlight, illumination, vision, and wisdom; he is also a god of order and restraint. Dionysus is the Greek patron deity of dithyrambic music, along with wine, revelry, and sexual frenzy. If Apollo represents a dream world of order, Dionysus and his cult manifest a collapse of social and emotional restraints, an abandonment of self-control, and a breakdown of boundaries that separate people due to the intoxicating music that not only arouses us, but also affects our emotions and physically moves us to dance. The Apollonian, a symbol of form, light, reason, order, and limitation, is composed of distinct things that can be ordered, classified, and differentiated from one another, whereas the Dionysian, a potentially destructive force, has dominion over the more chaotic realm of music, which embodies fantasy, disorder, limitlessness, and inebriety.[63] The Apollonian and Dionysian represent modes of orientation toward the external world and oneself. The mode of self-understanding from the Apollonian perspective views the self as standing at a distance and separate from its objects of perception, whereas the Dionysian mode of self-understanding represents a collapse of the Apollonian. Within the context of this scenario, Kant's critique of reason represents the Apollonian mode of orientation. This does not necessarily mean that Nietzsche wants to completely overturn the Apollonian mode, but one must, at least, maintain a skeptical attitude towards it. In fact, one should emulate the

skeptic because he/she is the great person, which consists of the ability 'to will something great and the means to it. Freedom from any kind of conviction is part of the strength of his will.'[64] According to Deleuze's study of his philosophy, Nietzsche, who the postmodernist interprets as intending to develop a philosophy of becoming grounded on a physics of force, finds absent in Kant's critique of reason a genealogy of reason, an analysis of the genesis of reason itself.[65]

Inspired by his work on Nietzsche, his anti-Hegelianism, and collaboration with Guattari, Deleuze thinks that society is a more direct result of irrational factors, and he and Guattari argue that Max Weber and Karl Marx are wrong to conclude that modern modes of production are rational. Instead of referring to human beings as rational creatures, Deleuze and Guattari refer to humans as oedipalized and castrated: 'We are all schizos! We are all perverts! We are all libidos that are too viscous and too fluid—and not be preference, but wherever we have been carried by the deterritorialized flows.'[66] Deleuze and Guattari are not only attacking psychoanalysis, but they are also challenging the representational model of thought. In other words, these philosophers want to find something that is irreducible to the concepts of identity and representation. They perceive a need for a philosophy of differences as difference. Following the lead of Nietzsche, Deleuze states, 'In short, it is a question of causing a little of Dionysus's blood to flow in the organic veins of Apollo.'[67]

The emphasis on desire, which we have already discussed in Chapter 3, by Deleuze and Guattari is an example of their embracing of Nietzsche's Dionysus. As we have already implied, Deleuze and Guattari reject any negative definition of desire as symptomatic of a reactionary or slave mentality, and they understand desire as an unbound, free-moving energy akin to the will to power in Nietzsche and the libido in the psychoanalytic theory of Freud. This unconscious, immanent, and indifferent energy is not a threat to society because it is related to the oedipial complex, but it is dangerous because it is revolutionary. Deleuze and Guattari explain that 'Desire does not "want" revolution, it is revolutionary in its own right, as though involuntary, by wanting what it wants.'[68] The revolutionary nature of desire does not have anything to do with the

overturning of a prior social order or the implementation of some new social system. Although it is respectively unconcerned with beginnings or ends, it is concerned with interregrums, intermezzos, the space between one thing and another, which represents the location of the unpredictable interstices of the desiring process.

Within the in-between space, what Deleuze and Guattari call nomadic thought, a non-personal, multiple, and unfixed mode of thinking, takes place. By moving freely in an element of exteriority, nomadic thought synthesizes a multiplicity of elements while retaining their heterogeneity. Thus nomadic thought does not reduce the many to some kind of identity or orders the diverse elements by a sort of hierarchical rank. Rather than moving toward identity, nomadic thought follows the lead of difference, which counters the tendency of reason to encompass everything and to not allow anything to escape its power. According to Deleuze, reason does not have anything to do with identity or grounding because it is schizophrenic in the sense that it leans towards the ground and forms of representation and also tends towards the groundless and formless. Deleuze explains these tendencies in Greek mythical terms: 'If difference is not the fiancée, Ariadne, then it passes from Theseus to Dionysus, from the grounding principle to the universal "ungrounding".'[69] This movement toward difference is diametrically opposed to the unity that Radhakrishnan seeks in his philosophy with intuitive knowledge, a kind of absolute knowledge that unites being and knowing, idea and reality, reference and identity. As Radhakrishnan states the situation, 'It is existence aware of itself.'[70] The intuitive insight of Radhakrishnan and the nomadic thought of Deleuze and Guattari are agreed, however, that each respective concept is identical to freedom.

The path of thinking for Deleuze and Guattari is repetitive because they are attempting to think difference and repetition itself, which appears as difference. This does not involve anything conceptual because a conceptless difference is akin to the essence of repetition.[71] When repetition appears as difference it disguises itself in its appearance. This possesses implications for the representational mode of thinking. Since difference appears by means of a disguise and is not inscribed within a concept, it is free of being 'mediated by representation.'[72]

And due to the case that repetition differs in kind from representation, this entails that what is repeated cannot be represented.

Deleuze replaces the tension between appearance and reality with the simulacrum, which he defines as demonic images devoid of resemblance with the ability to function by themselves.[73] This Dionysian machine is a simulation, a phantasm itself, which subverts the same or any representative model and thereby renders it false. Since it is constructed upon a difference, the simulacrum internalizes a dissimilarity, although this does not suggest that it is a degraded copy. Deleuze explains that 'It harbors a positive power which denies *the original and the copy, the model and the reproduction.*'[74] Deleuze equates the simulacrum with the will to power as simulation and eternal return. This adoption and use of Nietzschean notions is intended to undermine the representational mode of thinking. This intention is evident when the cyclic, eternal return functions in an excentric way in relationship to a decentred centre.[75] In place of the coherence of representation, the eternal return substitutes its own errant chaos and causes only phantasms to return. Such a scenario possesses definite philosophical consequences. It is now impossible for metaphysics to extend our knowledge of reality as Kant thought possible if its propositions are synthetic and a priori. It also becomes impossible to identify fundamental principles that are implicit in valid knowledge and to discover invariable and unalterable truths that cannot be affected by time and change. Moreover, it is impossible to cling to an out-dated Cartesian ideal of precision and certitude in thinking because thinking demands movement on a plane of immanence that is akin to chaos, which is characterized by infinite speed and dismantling of any consistency or structure, that inscribes contours on the surfaces of the planes of immanence. These planes of immanence must be multiple because no single plane is capable of encompassing all of chaos without collapsing into it.[76]

Besides Deleuze and Guattari, Kristeva and Mark C. Taylor also embrace the Dionysian element in Nietzsche's philosophy because both of them advocate carnivalesque play. In Kristeva's thought, the carnivalesque includes the characteristics of spectacle, game, play, contradiction, and relativization. It expresses

itself in language that reflects symbolic relationships and analogy that take precedence over substance and causality connections.[77] In fact, its structure ignores substance, causality, or identity because it exists only in and through relationships. Carnival is also dialogical in the sense that 'It is a spectacle, but without a stage; a game, but also a daily undertaking, a signifier, but also a signified.'[78] The participant in the carnival is disrupted and split because he/she is both actor and spectator, loses his/her sense of individuality, divides into a subject and object of the play of carnival, and is finally reduced to nothing, which emphatically suggests that the participant becomes a liminal being. All of this takes place within the context of marginality: 'The scene of the carnival, where there is no stage, no "theater", is thus both stage and life, game and dream discourse and spectacle.'[79] The carnivalesque is rebellious and challenges social law, authority, and God; it is, moreover, anti-rationalistic.[80]

In a similar vein, Taylor views the carnivalesque as a form of play, an unending and purposeless game, that upsets traditional hierarchies, and inverts inherited and shared values and established meanings. The carnivalesque is not merely radical, but it is also decadent: 'When it becomes radical, inversion is transformed into a perversion that is subversive.'[81] Within the perverse and subversive realm of the carnival, order is overturned and gives way to impropriety, expropriation, dispossession, and transgression. From Taylor's perspective, the term 'carnival' is etymologically related to the flesh, elevation, and to lift up: 'Carnival might be understood as the elevation of the body, the resurrection of the flesh.'[82] Taylor's notion of the play of carnival disrupts and overcomes binary thinking, which Taylor appears to suggest is indicative of rationality. Nonetheless, this is Taylor's grasp of the Dionysian realm, an inverted world of erring, wandering, and mazing about in a meaningless pattern characterized by the frivolity of the play of carnival.

In contrast to Kristeva and Taylor, the philosophy of Radhakrishnan seeks wholeness and unity: 'Intuitive insight, whatever be the line, is a whole-view where the mind in its totality strains forward to know the truth.'[83] Kristeva and Taylor can argue that intuitive knowledge is private, subjective, and incommunicable, and that it does not give universal truth and is incapable of verification. With a kind of modified utilitarian argument, Radhakrishnan responds to such a stance: 'Intuitive knowledge is verified by its capacity to bring coherence and harmony into systems framed by the intellect.'[84] Rather than the instinctive and a flight to unreason, intuitive knowledge helps us to see the indivisible oneness of human existence, an apprehension that is not contrary to rationality for Radhakrishnan, although it is an awareness that is opposed to the madness of Dionysus. Rather than the play of carnival and the uncertainty that it introduces into life, Radhakrishnan thinks that we need to become free from fear, anxiety, and internal discord by finding a spiritual harmony. Instead of Dionysian madness and frenzy that is suggested by the notion of carnivalesque by Kristeva and Taylor, Radhakrishnan says that we need the following: 'We need a rational faith to sustain a new order of life.'[85] In other words, we need order over chaos, the Apollonian over the Dionysian.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The several hermeneutical dialogues in this chapter find postmodernists and Indian philosophers agreeing that reason contains inherent limitations and that it does not have universal validity. Both sides also agree for the most part about the need to break away from representational modes of thinking, to be suspicious of rational theory, and adopt an anti-foundationalist attitude toward reason as a basis for philosophy. Drawing a parallel between the postmodernists and ancient western philosophy, Schrag observes, 'As did the Sophists of old, so do the new postmodernists privilege the way of opinion and disparage the claims of reason.'[86] The Indian philosophers do not deprecate reason like several of the postmodernists as much as they recognize its limitations from the beginning of their efforts to philosophize. In a sense the Indian philosophers already possess a healthy scepticism about the powers of rationality, but this does not keep them from asserting the possibility for certainty, whereas postmodernism becomes more like a pervasive cultural version of scepticism.

Besides these general agreements and differences between the postmodernists and Indian philosophers, we have also

called attention to some commonalities. Lyotard and the Nikāya Buddhists agree about the importance of time, are suspicious about reason, and believe that there is no certainty of truth based on reason. The Buddhists do not share Lyotard's interest in saving reason or how it can deal with the plural. Convinced that reason is not primary, Bataille perceives no need to construct rational thought, and he is certain that reason cannot provide a framework for a revision of values, whereas Mohanty disagrees with Bataille because he thinks that rationality can become successful with the inclusion of particular components. And Daya Krishna also disagrees with Bataille because values are identical with rationality, although in the final analysis value transcends rationality and its opposite irrationality. Although reason can function as a means of control for Foucault, Aurobindo thinks that reason can transform itself into an intuitive awareness, which is made possible by the transcendence built into reason.

If Heidegger thinks that reason is necessary, connected to Being, and requires one to leap in response to its call, Śaṅkara does not agree with Heidegger because reason is not a necessary and fundamental principle, is subordinate to revealed scripture, is groundless, and without any connected to Being. Its primary utility for Śaṅkara is argumentative. For Indian thinkers like Śaṅkara, there is no purely rational and privileged sphere of knowing. Larson explains this further: 'Generalized notions of "reason" or "experience" are simply cognitive episodes within the unfolding flow of human awareness, and there is no privileged realm of knowing of a purely rational kind or of a purely experiential kind that guarantees reliable knowledge or certainty.'[87] We find more common ground between Derrida and Śaṅkara on the topic of reason because they concur that reason is limited, impermanent, and supplemental in nature.

We have also seen that Radhakrishnan does not share Levinas' approach to reason with the latter's emphasis on interrelationship and communication. For Radhakrishnan, reason is subordinate to intuition, although it positively supplies conceptual clarity and justifies the validity of intuition, which transcends reason. Unlike Levinas' notion of reason, Radhakrishnan's intuition creates identity, is non-dualistic, and self-valid, although both thinkers agree that reason is not universal. Moreover, Levinas

and Radhakrishnan disagree about scepticism, which the latter thinker finds to be self-contradictory.

Finally, we surveyed the importance of desire and its revolutionary nature in Deleuze and Guattari. We also noted their challenge to a representational model of thought with their advocacy of nomadic thought that leads to difference, whereas Radhakrishnan seeks wholeness and unity through intuition. Like the embrace of the Dionysian element in the philosophy of Nietzsche by Deleuze and Guattari with their emphasis on desire, Kristeva and Taylor stress the carnivalesque, a form of decadence, while Radhakrishnan decides for order over chaos. The choice by some postmodern thinkers to embrace madness over reason is disturbing to some of its critics. Stanley Rosen observes:

> Postmodernism is the Enlightenment gone mad. In human affairs, madness takes the role of contradiction in logic; anything follows. One consequence of the madness of theoretical extremism is that an ostensible repudiation of Platonism is itself a version of Platonism, that is, of Platonism as it is, not as it is imagined to be.[88]

From a different perspective, another critic of postmodern thought thinks that it represents 'a radicalization and retrenchment of modernity (and particularly in conjunction with the late-modern reactions within the modern itself) than as a period of history that comes "after" the modern.'[89] Nonetheless, the embrace of the Dionysian element by some postmodernist may not be as decadent as it appears at first glance because Rosen thinks that philosophy itself is decadent, while it is also identified in a paradoxical way as a representative of progress.[90]

By their rejection, deprecation, or problematizing of rationality, some postmodern thinkers deny the significance of a unique human capacity and valuable attribute. By intending to critique the notion of subject-centred reason of Kant, Habermas offers an alternative to many of the postmodern philosophers by replacing Kantian reason with a form that is intersubjective and communicative. If rationalism is false for Habermas, it is then impossible to support the notions of human dignity, autonomy, and responsibility.[91] Lacking the Marxian social theory of Habermas, an alternative optimistic assessment of the potential power of rationality is given by Nozick: 'Rationality provides us

with the (potential) power to investigate and discover anything and everything; it enables us to control and direct our behavior through reasons and the utilization of principles.'[92] The principles mentioned by Nozick are intended to guide us to make correct decisions or judgments and to afford us some control over factors that might lead us astray. But going astray is exactly what some postmodern thinkers advocate with their radical attitude toward rationality, whereas Indian thinkers have discovered another way to stay on a path to liberation without relying upon rationality, although this way is not anti-rational.

ENDNOTES

1. Immanuel Kant, *Critque of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), p. 538.
2. Jean-François Lyotard, *Peregrinations: Law, Form, Event* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 7.
3. Lyotard, *Position*, p. xxv.
4. Lyotard, *Just Gaming*, p. 86.
5. Gasché, *Inventions of Difference*, p. 117.
6. Lyotard, *Peregrinations*, pp. 8–9.
7. Ibid., p. 7.
8. Louis de La Vallée Poussin claims that the Buddha was a rationalist because his thought was non-mystical and non-metaphysical (p. 32) in *The Way to Nirvāṇa: Six Lectures on Ancient Buddhism as a Discipline of Salvation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917). Radhakrishnan derives his conclusion of the rationality of the Buddha from the Buddha's wish to study reality or experience without any reference to supernatural revelation (I. 359) in *Indian Philosophy*. Jayatilleke measures the Buddha by whether or not rational theories are based on a priori reasoning: 'When we thus examine the Buddha as a rationalist in this sense, we find that he rejected such claims,' (p. 403) in *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*.
9. Jayatilleke, p. 273.
10. Frank J. Hoffman, *Rationality and Mind in Early Buddhism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), p. 23. Hoffman criticizes K. N. Jayatilleke's claim (pp. 49–51) that the fourfold pattern of logic is superior to Aristotelian logic in *The Message of the Buddha* (New York: The Free Press, 1974) because 'There is nothing in the fourfold logic, properly understood, which is either in conflict, or in advance of, Aristotelian Logic,' p. 23.

11. Georges Bataille, *The Absence of Myth: Writings on Surrealism*, trans. and ed. Michael Richardson (London, New York: Verso, 1994).
12. Mohanty, *Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought*, p. 3.
13. Krishna, *Nature of Philosophy*, pp. 17, 102, 106.
14. Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Random House, 1973), p. 70.
15. Ibid., p. 89.
16. Ibid., p. 107.
17. Aurobindo, *Life Divine*, I: 66.
18. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, p. 95.
19. Heidegger, *Der Satz vom Grund*, p. 17. Robert Nozick views rational principles as a form of binding (p. 10) and as a guide for behaviour (p. 12) in *The Nature of Rationality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
20. Heidegger, *Der Satz vom Grund*, p. 39.
21. Ibid., p. 90.
22. Ibid., p. 93.
23. Ibid., p. 96. My translation of the text.
24. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 259.
25. Gasché, *Inventions of Difference*, p. 121.
26. Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 213.
27. Derrida, 'The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of Its Pupils', *Diacritics*, Vol. 13 (1983), p. 8.
28. Ibid., p. 9.
29. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p.149.
30. Derrida, 'Principle of Reason', p. 12.
31. Ibid., p. 16.
32. Śaṅkara, *Vedanta Sutras*, 2.1.11. See also Murty, p. 151.
33. Halbfass, *Tradition and Reflection*, p. 178. Anantanand Rambachan distinguishes between two kinds of reasoning in Indian philosophy: syllogist inference (*anumāna*) and what is called *sāmānyato-dṛṣṭanumāna*, which is equivalent to analogical reasoning; it is also called *yukti* or *tarka* (p. 103) in *Accomplishing the Accomplished: The Vedas as a Source of Valid Knowledge in Śaṅkara*, Monographs of the Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy, No. 10 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991).
34. Śaṅkara, *Vedānta Sūtras*, 2.1.11.
35. Ibid., 2. 2. 22–3.
36. Arvind Sharma, *The Philosophy of Religion and Advaita Vedānta: A Comparative Study in Religion and Reason* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), p. 35.
37. Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 68.

38. Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being,* p. 167.
39. Ibid., p. 165.
40. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* p. 219.
41. Ibid., p. 219.
42. Ibid., p. 219.
43. Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other,* trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Marshav (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 41.
44. Ibid., p. 67.
45. Ibid., p. 79.
46. Radhakrishnan, *Hindu View of Life,* p. 14.
47. Ibid., p. 54.
48. Radhakrishnan, *Idealist View of Life,* p. 95.
49. Radhakrishnan, 'Reply to Critics', in *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan,* ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, The Library of Living Philosophers, Vol. VIII (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1951; reprint 1991), pp. 792–3.
50. Radhakrishnan, 'Fragments,' p. 61; *Idealist View of Life,* p. 181.
51. Radhakrishnan, 'Reply to Critics', p. 791.
52. Radhakrishnan, *Idealist View of Life,* p. 138.
53. Ibid., p. 138.
54. Ibid., p. 99.
55. Ibid., pp. 92, 157.
56. Levinas, *Time and the Other,* p. 65.
57. Ibid., p. 65.
58. Radhakrishnan, *Otherwise Than Being,* p. 168.
59. Radhakrishnan, *Idealist View of Life,* p. 61. Nozick disagrees with Radhakrishnan, but he wants to go beyond the merely skeptical position: 'The skeptic's possibility is a logically coherent one, in tension with the existence of (almost all) knowledge; so we seek a hypothesis to explain how, even given the skeptic's possibilities, knowledge is possible' (p. 168) in *Philosophical Explanations.*
60. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and No One,* trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 42.
61. Ibid., p. 42.
62. Nietzsche, *The Will To Power,* trans. Walter Kaufman and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967), 1041, p. 536.
63. Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy,* trans. Wm. A. Haussman in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche,* Vol. 1, ed. Oscar Levy (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), pp. 22–7; *Will To Power,* 1050, p. 539.
64. Nietzsche, *Will To Power,* 936, p. 505.
65. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy,* trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 91.

66. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus,* p. 67.
67. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 262.
68. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus,* p. 116.
69. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* p. 275.
70. Radhakrishnan, *Idealist View of Life,* p. 145.
71. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* p. 15.
72. Ibid., p. 27.
73. Ibid., pp. 127–8.
74. Deleuze, *Sense of Logic,* p. 262.
75. Ibid., pp. 264–5.
76. Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?,* p. 50.
77. Kristeva, *Desire,* p. 72.
78. Ibid., p. 78.
79. Ibid., p. 79.
80. Ibid., p. 79.
81. Taylor, *Erring,* p. 161.
82. Ibid., p. 167.
83. Radhakrishnan, *Idealist View of Life,* p. 211.
84. Radhakrishnan, 'Reply to Critics', p. 794.
85. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religion and Western Thought,* p. 19.
86. Calvin O. Schrag, *The Resources of Rationality: A Response to the Postmodern Challenge* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 167.
87. Gerald James Larson, *India's Agony Over Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 152.
88. Stanley Rosen, *The Ancients and the Moderns: Rethinking Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 20.
89. Schrag, p. 45.
90. Rosen, *Ancients and the Moderns,* p. 1.
91. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action, Volume I,* p. 17.
92. Nozick, *Nature of Rationality,* p. xi.



9
Endings

Based on the previous discussions, a wide variety of opinions have been offered on numerous topics. Even though there is no complete agreement on many of these topics, even among those in either the postmodern or the Indian philosophical groups, there are, however, some common themes: the distrust of language; writing as a violent and risky activity; desire as a life-affirming or liberating force; abjection as a postmodern form of suffering; death as a revelatory event; the unreal or real nature of the self; the importance of difference and identity in the respective intellectual camps; the contrast of ontological presence with absence; the stress on alterity by postmodernists; the distrust of rationality; a recognition of its limitations; and an effort to break out of the representational mode of thinking. With respect to these enduring themes, no final or decisive conclusion was reached in the hermeneutical dialogue. The lack of any finality is both intentional and necessary because comparative philosophy is a never-ending process, a topic that we will discuss more fully later in this chapter. Since this comparative dialogue actually commenced even before I wrote the initial word on the title page, and since it is underway and will not really conclude at the end of this final chapter, it will prove helpful to review the major themes of this work before moving on to a discussion of endings. At this point, it can be stated that endings are for

looking back and summing up the results of this hermeneutical dialogue.

A DIALOGICAL RETROSPECTIVE

The Nikāya Buddhists and Derrida agree that language is impermanent, that it possesses no lasting structure, and that it cannot express absolute truth. Due to the special nature of the words of the historical Buddha for the Nikāya Buddhists, Derrida sees his words evolving into a text, an entity independent from the actual historical figure. Śaṅkara also distrusts language, an instrument of ignorance, because one cannot be certain that it can convey the truth. Even though language is a product of ignorance, and ultimately unreal for Śaṅkara, it can serve as a means of liberation. In sharp contrast to Śaṅkara's attitude towards language, Rāmānuja is more optimistic because language possesses a referential character, inherent meanings, and is innately connected to objects, whereas Derrida thinks that giving something a name separates it from other objects and dislocates it. Since giving something a name also involves its erasure, a name of something holds no privileged position for Derrida, and a word possesses no intrinsic denotative power as Rāmānuja appears to claim. If a thing is an object for Rāmānuja, it is neither an object nor a subject for Derrida. Abhinavagupta is also at philosophical odds on the theory of language with the French deconstructionist. Since Abhinavagupta's philosophy and theory of language has a transcendental foundation, he thinks that language can become a means of liberation, whereas Derrida perceives this kind of philosophical position as being logocentric. In contrast to Derrida's view of language as dynamic and changing, Daya Krishna argues that language is referential or instrumental in character, which means that words have innate characteristics or meanings, and these features enable them to convey a state of affairs that is experientially present.

The differences between Indian thinkers and postmodernists over the value and nature of writing are even more obvious than those over the nature and function of language. Due to the strong oral tradition in Indian culture, there is a negative cultural bias against writing, an impermanent mode of communication. The

classical Indian philosophers would have a difficult time grasping why postmodernists like Blanchot and Derrida claim the pre-eminence of writing over speech, since the former stresses its absurd, violent, and sacrificial nature, while Derrida calls attention to its violent, risky, and dangerous nature that causes anguish, leads one astray, and means nothing. The Indian philosophers tend to agree with Blanchot and Derrida when the postmodernists claim that writing is more closely related to absence than to presence. But the Indian thinkers point to this as an example of a deficiency in writing, whereas the postmodernists find this a desirable and positive trait.

With respect to the theme of desire, the comparison between the philosophers of the *Upaniṣads* and Deleuze and Guattari demonstrates a number of glaring differences between the respective positions. For the postmodernists, the only meaningful phenomenon is desire, a life-affirming force that creates desiring-machines, that is continually produced by schizophrenia and itself produces reality. In contrast to the liberating nature of desire for Deleuze and Guattari, some Upaniṣadic thinkers argue that desire becomes meaningless when intuitive realization comes because one becomes immortal, although the desire for the eternal self (Ātman) provides one's initial motivation. In ordinary desire for some Upaniṣadic sages, there is something lacking, while Deleuze and Guattari perceive the lack in the subject and not in desire, which is complete and lacking nothing. If Nikāya Buddhists find a connection between desire and the root problem of human suffering and find it necessary to control or repress it, Deleuze and Guattari see the solution to the problem of suffering differently, because the root of the problem is the repression of desire. The Nikāya Buddhists and the postmodernists agree that desire is interrelated and self-perpetuating. The latter want to liberate desire, a productive force, by the use of schizoanalysis, whose purpose is to de-oedipalize the unconscious, because the so-called Oedipus complex obscures our grasp of desire. Lacan also examines desire in connection with the unconscious, and he finds that it is associated with an ontological lack, whereas Śaṅkara equates desire with evil, and thinks that it is directly connected with an object of perception. According to Lacan, desire, a linguistic displacement, is not simply connected with

external objects because it is not possible for it to become concretized by language. Lacan and Śaṅkara agree that difference is necessary for the development of desire. They disagree when Lacan claims that we are ignorant about our desires, and Śaṅkara argues that, rather, we are ignorant about the nature of our true self. Lacan is more in agreement with Abhinavagupta about desire because both philosophers think that desire leads to liberation, even though liberation is conceived very differently for these thinkers. According to Abhinavagupta, it is necessary to elevate desire to the level of pure will by merging human will with the limitless, creative will of God. In a similar fashion, Levinas shares with Radhakrishnan and Aurobindo a desire for the absolute, a metaphysical desire, although the Indian thinkers disagree with Levinas when he states that this desire cannot be satisfied. There is mutual agreement between Radhakrishnan and Levinas that ordinary desires cannot be fully satisfied, whereas Aurobindo agrees with Levinas that there is a gap between the desired and the desiring subject. Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan part company with Levinas when he begins to stress that desire is excessive, disruptive, exterior, strange, other, and possesses no further intentions beyond itself.

Desire overlaps with suffering in the context of Nikāya Buddhism, whereas suffering is ultimately unreal and due to ignorance for Śaṅkara. Suffering is real and traced to ignorance for Madhva, and it is directly related to ignorance and karma for Rāmānuja. All the Indian thinkers considered in Chapter 4 agree that suffering can be terminated, whereas Kristeva and Levinas suggest that there is no escape from suffering. Levinas concerns himself with suffering within the context of solitude, while Kristeva is more concerned with suffering inflicted by others upon a single person who becomes a marginal being in relationship to the dominant group. This marginal person is an abject being who shares with the notion of suffering in Buddhism, the features of imperfection, frustration, sorrow, impermanence, emptiness, uncanniness, insubstantiality, concealment, indirectness, and intrinsic nature. Kristeva and the Nikāya Buddhists also agree about the necessary connection between philosophical reflection and psychological speculation, both want a non-metaphysical explanation of human experience, both

emphasize the important role of the unconscious in shaping suffering, they agree that different modes of suffering disturb identity and order, both parties agree that suffering and abjection share a heterogeneous nature, they tend to view suffering and abjection as defiling, and also agree that the monk and the abject are marginal beings. Even with all this agreement between the positions of the Nikāya Buddhists and Kristeva, there are significant differences between them. The Buddhists' approach is more empirically based than Kristeva's concept of abjection, and the Buddhists do not directly connect suffering and narcissism in the same way that Kristeva does in her work, although the Buddhists do recognize the necessity of eliminating love of self. The Buddhists think that there is a definite solution to suffering, whereas Kristeva does not think that there is a remedy for abjection. This disagreement is partly connected to a conception of a definite telos in Buddhism and a total lack of one in Kristeva's work, which emphasizes difference and excess unlike the Buddhists' stress on moderation. In the comparison between Bataille and Radhakrishnan, we noticed the emphasis by the former on excess and decadence, and his insistence that the final sense of eroticism is death, whereas Radhakrishnan advocates a path between extremes and opposes the pure play of eroticism.

The postmodernists' emphasis on difference and excess is evident in their treatment of death. Derrida views death, for instance, as the movement of différance and as a unifying factor. The Buddhists agree with the postmodern conclusion that death is both revelatory and liberating, although the Buddhists are more radical about their conviction that death must be directly and existentially confronted by an individual. If the Buddhists can be viewed as radical in their direct encounter with death, a postmodernist like Bataille is excessive in his theory of eroticism, a secret and antisocial activity that paves the way for death. The emphasis on excessiveness is also evident in Blanchot's stress on dying, a process that is mightier than death and something that is never fulfilled. In contrast to Blanchot's claim that death, a revelatory power, is necessary for liberation and knowledge, Radhakrishnan states that death is not excessive, but is rather part of a process of becoming and continual dissolution.

The excessiveness typical of postmodern philosophy is evident in Taylor's conception of the self that is without an established presence or a secure identity. Taylor's self is a combination of identity and difference, subject to time and death, whereas Śaṅkara defines the self as spaceless, timeless, non-relational, and the ground of all distinctions. Taylor's stained and wounded self leaves us with markings, a trace of a non-identical self that is both present and absent, relational, temporal, lacking proximity, without immediacy, and devoid of presence. The eccentric and errant self of Taylor is a marginal and liminal being, like the abject person in Kristeva's philosophy, whose influence, along with that of Lacan, can be seen in Taylor's thought.

According to Lacan, the subject is totally alienated from self and others. Lacan traces the basic alienation of the self to an innate division within the self between it and its ego and a desire that cannot be satisfied, which thereby renders the self incomplete. Besides the basic alienation from oneself due to the split between the subject and the ego, trapped between disintegration and a wholeness that is delusory, one's true identity is lost in the unconscious, and thus one is not an autonomous and self-conscious subject. Not unlike other conceptions of the self by Taylor, Kristeva, and other postmodernists, Lacan thinks that the subject is decentred, which necessarily suggests for him that the self is a pure negativity, an entity without identity. The subject is also eccentric, trapped by paranoiac alienation, a narcissistic fool for the idealized self-image that one projects unto the other. Lacan is more philosophically akin to the Buddhist concept of non-self than he is to Rāmānuja's notion of a permanent self.

The Nikāya Buddhists agree with postmodernists like Taylor and Derrida that the self possesses no ontological presence or permanence. The Buddhists share a number of differences with Levinas by asserting that the self cannot transcend itself, it possesses no enduring substance, it is without identification, and it lacks any internal or external dimension that is permanent. The Buddhists and Levinas do agree that the self is temporal, non-autonomous, possesses a proper ethical responsibility to others, and that it is important to empty the self of egoism. Other thinkers continue debating the status and presence of the self.

Although Abhinavagupta and Madhva do not share the same philosophical position about the importance of difference, they do agree that the self is self-luminous and can know itself and objects. In contrast, Derrida and Kristeva call into question the presence of the self. For Derrida, the self is without presence to itself and cannot make itself present to itself because it is a trace, possessing the ability to inscribe itself as a difference between the breaches that it creates in space. According to Kristeva, the self is heterogeneous and decentred because it splits apart during its development. Kristeva claims that the self is an infinite series of continually fluctuating signifiers, which negates any possibility for its presence.

Charles Taylor and Radhakrishnan recognize a more stable vision of the nature of the self. The former thinks that personal identity is determined by the space we occupy with others, whereas Radhakrishnan views the self, which is constant and unchanging, more in relationship to itself as a unity of body, mind, and spirit than in relationship to the other. In contrast, Taylor argues that the self defines itself within language in dialogue with others that is necessarily a context of change. While Taylor argues that we can know the self through narrative and self-interpretation, which unites our personal time, gives us coherence and enables us to respond to others, Radhakrishnan is convinced that we gain knowledge of our true self through intuitive insight or what he calls an integral experience, although he agrees with Taylor that the self is constituted by a sense of inwardness. Disagreeing about the exact nature and meaning of this inwardness, Radhakrishnan argues that the divine is the source of perfection of the self and that the self represents the centre of one's being, whereas Taylor perceives a decentring process as a complement of his grasp of inwardness. In sharp contrast to the other philosophers considered on the problem of the self, Radhakrishnan and Taylor are the only thinkers to stress the rational nature of the self.

The lack of presence of the self in postmodern philosophy is connected to the importance of difference, like the difference that is unthought according to Heidegger, the differend in Lyotard's philosophy, the technique of schizoanalysis as defined by Deleuze and Guattari, and genealogy in the work of Foucault. Being devoid of presence and possessing a close relationship to difference, the self and the emphasis upon difference are both grounded in the general anti-metaphysical attitude of many postmodern thinkers. Derrida gives difference a major place in his philosophy by means of his neologism différance, a finite movement that precedes and structures all opposition. Différance, a pure trace, represents a trace before an object is present to perception. Derrida agrees with Madhva that difference is not a metaphysical abstraction, although the Indian philosopher states in contrast to Derrida that difference constitutes the essence of things and is not a mere attribute of something. Madhva does not think that difference exists independently of an object, whereas Derrida asserts that différance represents the origin of all differences with a given thing always remaining other.

Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Abhinavagupta are in sharp disagreement with Derrida over the notion of difference in philosophy. Śaṅkara thinks that differences, which exist within the domain of lower knowledge, are connected to false knowledge and delusions, and they possess no reality, which Śaṅkara proves by means of his method of sublation, a cancelling of one experience after it has been contradicted by a new experience. According to Rāmānuja, perception produces difference between objects, whereas Abhinavagupta thinks that difference is an external distinction and not a product of the movement of play that it is for Derrida. Abhinavagupta asserts that ultimately different things are identical because there is a single reality that he identifies with pure consciousness.

It is the acceptance of différance that makes it impossible for Derrida to accept the possibility of a unifying factor in life, whereas Brahman provides unity for Śaṅkara. It also leads Derrida to stress the difference and otherness in his comments about God, whose name signifies nothing and reflects a collapse of language, while Madhva, who also stresses difference in his philosophy, thinks that God's name signifies a personal deity. In acute contrast, Derrida equates God with death, and he attempts to go beyond God in a movement of transcendence that is intended to let God be beyond being, and open everything to the play of God, whereas Madhva thinks that there is nothing beyond God, and the play of God is already present.

Following the philosophical lead of Derrida, Taylor also equates God with death and discusses the death of God in terms

of a meaningless play of erring, a perversion that is subversive, whereas Rāmānuja experiences God as life and not death. Not only does Taylor relativize the absolute, he thinks that the body represents the margin that possesses no relation to God or the self in Rāmānuja's sense. And when Rāmānuja sees non-difference between the self and God because the self recognizes itself in unity with Brahman, in sharp contrast Taylor sees narcissism, an attempt by the narcissist to possess the other.

Difference and identity are perceived differently by Abhinavagupta and Levinas, although they define the infinite in a similar way, as both different and non-different from the finite. Even though Abhinavagupta thinks that everything represents a manifestation of a single pure consciousness, the experience of difference makes unity meaningful, while Levinas emphasizes the alterity of the infinite. Since the self, world, and infinity for Levinas only share difference in common, it is not possible to achieve identity with infinity, in sharp contrast to the position of Abhinavagupta. These thinkers also disagree about whether or not one can find evidence or know God. Moreover, Levinas contends that being does not lead to God, it leads to the absence of God, whereas being is connected with the inner aspect of absolute consciousness for Abhinavagupta.

Ontology is another important theme for the dialogue between postmodernists and Indian philosophers. Levinas thinks, for instance, that there is no answer to the question about Being, which he conceives as anonymous, whereas some Indian philosophers equate Being with Brahman and deny its anonymous nature. Indian philosophers also disagree that being is a burden, that it is necessary for one to flee from oneself, and that the presence of being is evanescent as alleged by Levinas. Related to their understanding of ontology is the tendency to deny presence by some postmodern thinkers, whereas Śaṅkara equates being with presence. Derrida, for instance, calls this type of assertion into question from the perspective of différance, which is never present because it does not exist, while Śaṅkara thinks that all difference is unreal from the purview of higher and liberating knowledge.

Another way to discuss difference is to refer to alterity. For Śaṅkara, the other is identical to us; it does not simply resemble us. The difference and exteriority of the other are ultimately

products of illusion for the Indian philosopher, which is not the case for Lacan and Levinas. Lacan finds a lack in the other, whereas Levinas thinks that the other is instrumental to the process of self-understanding. Both postmodernists agree that the other is mysterious, although Levinas identifies its mysterious aspect with its alterity and Lacan traces the mysterious nature of the other to a tension between consciousness and the unconscious within a person. In contrast, Śaṅkara thinks that the inability to intuitively grasp the true nature of the self and its essential unity with the other accounts for the mysterious nature of the other.

Derrida disagrees with Śaṅkara that it is ever possible to gain self-identity. Derrida argues that any grasp of Being involves the alterity of the other, a non-reducible entity. Any relationship with oneself is always set for Derrida within a larger system of interrelationships with others, which are always exterior or on the margin. For Śaṅkara, although the other is an object of my experience, it is something that is superimposed on the 'I', and it is possible for one to intuitively grasp one's true identity because it is always present for one to discover. Besides differences over ontology and alterity between the postmodernists and the Indian thinkers, we also noted some important differences with respect to the problem of rationality.

Lyotard wants to save reason, but he also wants to understand how time and relativity affect thinking. The Nikāya Buddhists agree with Lyotard about taking the concept of time into consideration, but they tend to be very suspicious about reason and the certainty of truth. Reason is also not primary for Bataille, and it cannot provide the framework for a revision of values. Mohanty disagrees with the spirit of Bataille's position because rationality can be successful with certain components. And Daya Krishna disagrees with Bataille over the issue of values, which the former thinks are identical to rationality, although in the final analysis value transcends rationality and irrationality. In contrast to Foucault's insistence on viewing reason as a means of control, Aurobindo thinks that transcendence is built into reason and gives reason the ability to transform itself into intuitive awareness. According to Śaṅkara, reason is not a necessary and fundamental principle, and it possesses no connection to Being as Heidegger contends. Radhakrishnan agrees with Śaṅkara

that reason is subordinate to intuition, which is non-dualistic and self-valid, although it does have the ability to render conceptual clarity and justify the validity of intuition, whereas Levinas views reason within the context of interrelationship and communication. Although Radhakrishnan and Levinas disagree over scepticism because the former finds that it is self-contradictory, they do agree that reason is not universal. And if Radhakrishnan seeks wholeness and unity in his philosophy, Deleuze, Guattari, Kristeva, and Mark C. Taylor appear to prefer chaos over order in the forms of desire and carnival, representing, respectively, revolution and decadence. With relation to the problem of rationality and the postmodern emphasis on difference, J. N. Mohanty, a contemporary Indian philosopher, provides a response to the implications of the postmodernists' position that reason becomes shipwrecked, or demonstrates its limitations, in an encounter with difference: 'The universality of rational thinking transcends and yet comprehends local differences; it lives in and through such differences.'[1] The differences between postmodern and Indian philosophers are also evident in a comparison between their positions on the possibility of truth and meaning.

TRUTH, MEANING, AND THE REAL

In his work entitled *Human, All Too Human,* Friedrich Nietzsche summarizes the general philosophical situation as follows: 'But everything has become: there are *no eternal facts,* just as there are no absolute truths.'[2] Postmodern thinkers have followed his claim, whereas Indian philosophers would in general dispute Nietzsche's position on the impossibility of truth. Many Indian philosophers were writers, teachers, and organizers of monastic and learning centres, and they were convinced that the truth that they represented could be conveyed to others or that others could discover the truth for themselves. According to Foucault, truth is produced through power, and there is no way to exert power except by means of truth.[3] From the perspective of his method of genealogy, Foucault asserts that the deepest secret that a genealogist must reveal is that things have no essences.[4] Foucault's notion of truth does not have anything to do with the transcendental or the cogito. This is also true of Lacan's

position, which is focused on the subject. In short, Lacan thinks that if a subject does not refer specifically himself or herself to the truth there is no reason to refer to something as true or false or as reality and appearance.[5] Lacan views the beginning of psychoanalysis and the search for the truth about a person as the developing of ignorance in a subject. A somewhat different perspective is given by Mark C. Taylor, who thinks that truth is relative—both epistemologically and ontologically—due to the contextual nature of meaning and the relational nature of being.[6]

Derrida's works cannot be understood as an attempt to lead others to liberation and the truth because his works are prefatory in nature, which means that none of them represent an effort to disclose the truth in any conclusive sense. It would prove difficult to reveal the truth because there is no truth in itself to be disclosed.[7] If the truth is singular for thinkers like Śaṅkara, Abhinavagupta, Rāmānuja, and other Indian philosophers, it is plural for Derrida, who writes, 'There is therefore no one truth as such, and besides, even for me, even about me, truth is plural.'[8] Why go through the struggle to write, if the activity holds no purpose or possibility to discover a lasting truth? For Derrida, writing is its own justification, even though it is without essence, lacking negative or positive value, and literally means nothing.[9] Derrida's position renders a curious effect: 'A logorrhea results, an immense outpouring of words around an unsayable center.'[10]

If one believes that value, truth, meaning, or some combination of them tends to motivate the actions and words of people, Foucault thinks that it is possible to demonstrate that what people do and say is not determined by mentally constructed rules. And since it is possible to prove this is the case, it is also possible to demonstrate that any belief in the efficacy of value, truth, or meaning is illusory.[11] Because of his conviction that the truth is something that is achieved rather than produced by the individual, Radhakrishnan can metaphorically write, in sharp contrast to Foucault, that: 'The truth shapes itself from within and leaps forth as a spark from fire.'[12] With respect to the nature of meaning, Derrida takes a different approach than Foucault, although he arrives at a similar conclusion. Within a chain of signification for Derrida, meaning represents the space

between terms, their relations and interrelations. By focusing on the terms as such, one stands to miss their relations to one another and their differences wherein their meanings—nonself-originating products—reside. Following Derrida, Taylor calls attention to the contextual nature of meaning, which renders it relative due to its entanglement in a formative context that is radically relational. If meaning resides in the interconnections between terms, it is liminal in nature and continually appears and disappears.[13]

For Śaṅkara, in contrast, words have a universal character that gives them natural meanings. If one comprehends initially the meaning of the individual words, one can understand the meaning of a sentence, which necessarily implies that words give us knowledge. It is not, however, true that Brahman can be the meaning of a sentence because of its indefinable and unutterable nature and because it forms the ground of the negation of all duality.[14] According to Derrida, meaning is not something that can be found; there is nothing that precedes it, and nothing ultimately controls it. This does not suggest that one cannot strive for meaning, but one must become aware that it involves a risk: 'To risk meaning nothing is to start to play, and first to enter into the play of différance which prevents any word, any concept, any major enunciation from coming to summarize and to govern from the theological presence of a center the movement and textual spacing of differences.'[15] For Derrida, there is thus no centre to human existence, language, or society.

In direct opposition to Derrida's position, Śaṅkara thinks that a person does possess a centre. In order to find this centre, it is necessary for the individual to turn within oneself and discover one's immortal self. According to Derrida, the concept of the centre is contradictory: 'The center is at the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality has its center elsewhere. The center is not the center.'[16] Human beings are condemned to live on the edge because we can never find a centre that is permanent. Foucault agrees that there is a decentring process in human life that negates a privileged position to any centre.[17]

According to Śaṅkara, that which is permanent is real. That which is real persists uncontradicted through every mode of existence and the three moments of time.[18] The real, which is also eternal and infinite, cannot be sublated (bādha) by another experience, and the only thing that fits that criterion is Brahman, which excludes the nearly unreal world. This does not suggest that the term 'real' directly designates Brahman. Since Brahman is devoid of all attributes, a term like 'real' can only imply it. Rāmānuja and Madhva agree with each other that the only independent reality is God, but they differ from Śaṅkara by affirming that God possesses attributes. Madhva and Rāmānuja disagree, however, when the former insists that God is totally different from the Ātmans, body, space, and time.[19] As noted previously, Madhva wants to stress that the essence of reality is difference. In contrast, Rāmānuja makes it clear that God is non-dual but qualified by attributes, selves, and body, and is to be equated with the truth and reality.[20] Another major Indian philosophical figure that we have considered is Abhinavagupta, who equates reality with pure consciousness (saṃvid), a position far removed from that of Derrida.

There is certainly nothing real for Derrida because everything is a combination of presence and absence. Différance, a matrix of all presence and absence, makes it both possible and impossible for there to be reality and truth.[21] Even if we could isolate the real for Derrida, the real would be subject to the process of supplement, which would add to it only to replace it.[22] According to Foucault, it is power that produces reality.[23] The real, according to Lacan, is always missing, forever lacking, or never present.[24] The real, which is unknown, unknowable, and unspeakable, can only be imagined in fantasy.[25] There is a danger that such postmodern criticism of the real is nothing more than a naive arrogation of the disappearance of reality.[26] Nonetheless, Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan find Śaṅkara's conception of the real to be static. From Śaṅkara's perspective, the philosophies of Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan are radically finite and this-worldly, and they provide no attempt to solve the fundamental problems of human existence.

Such a finite stance suggests that one cannot be certain of anything because knowledge is limited and leaves one in doubt about the validity of one's judgements formed by what one knows. On the other hand, Śaṅkara thinks that one can reach certainty through knowledge, which is only possible through an

act of a conscious being. This is an indication of the unity of being and knowing, for Śaṅkara whose philosophy stands on certain truths, like the certitude provided by the revelatory nature of Vedic literature and its message about ultimate reality.[27] Every act of knowing is intrinsically valid and self-luminous: 'This argument may be summed up thus: whenever there is knowledge of an object, this fact is known in the very act; for nobody who has knowledge doubts whether he has it or not.'[28] Moreover, not only is revealed scripture a source of knowledge regarding Brahman, but anubhava (integral experience) is also a source of knowledge that involves the realization of oneself as Brahman.[29] In contrast, Foucault thinks that power produces knowledge: 'There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.'[30] Thus knowledge and power directly imply each other for Foucault, although they cannot give absolute certainty.

Unlike Śaṅkara, Derrida does not seek certainty because he is more interested in exposing the presuppositions, limitations, and illogic of thought and interpretation. Derrida's philosophy seems to suggest that he can only know what he deconstructs. And if he did deconstruct the self as he informs his reader, how is it possible for him to possess any knowledge? From Derrida's perspective, Śaṅkara's position is too logocentric and represents a privileged point of view that 'invites deconstruction. It seems that the condition of différance guides Derrida's work and attitude towards other philosophical systems seeking certainty by marking off their borders and carefully delineating their margins. Derrida observes, for instance, that spirit was not a major concern for Heidegger, and he was able to avoid thinking about and discussing it.[31]

The previous summary of prior chapters and this brief discussion of truth, meaning and the real, represent collective evidence of the many differences between postmodern thought and Indian modes of philosophy. The ability of Indian philosophers to respond forcefully to the challenge of postmodernism demonstrates its viability as an enduring philosophical legacy. And the ability of Indian philosophers to meet the challenge of postmodernism moves East and West a small step beyond the stereotypes associated with Orientalism.

POSTMODERNISM AND NIHILISM

Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Abhinavagupta, Madhva, and Radhakrishnan can assert with some justification that postmodern philosophy can be classified as nihilistic. The postmodern lack of acknowledgement for any enduring truth, or reality is an adequate basis for stating that such thinkers exemplify epistemological, alethiological, metaphysical, ethical, and axiological forms of nihilism. The Hindu philosophers cited would probably not be joined by the Nikāya Buddhists because of their shared convictions with some of the postmodernists in the relativity and impermanence of all worldly things, although I am not suggesting that there should be an equation of Nikāya Buddhism with nihilism because the fundamental soteriology of Buddhism negates such a contention.

In fact, a western scholar accuses Derrida, for instance, of an indifferent acceptance of nihilism. She claims that his method of deconstruction embraces nihilism by making it primary.[32] She makes two significant claims: there is a shift in the understanding of nihilism, and it is becoming the banality of the late twentieth century. In the first instance, nihilism gets 'transformed from a means of liberation to something intrinsically liberating.'[33] There is a certain irony in the banality of nihilism because it

> ultimately culminates in nihilism's opposite: dogmatism—the unrelenting insistence upon one's own position, one's own point of view, immune to any sort of criticism or rational scrutiny. When we fully and happily dispatch with truth, what we gain is not pluralism, not toleration, but rather the absolutization of the dominant power structures of the culture to which we belong. Nihilism, once complete, leaves us with nothing but the set of currently existing social practices and beliefs, in the absence of anything else, these practices and beliefs become, for all intents and purpose, absolute.[34]

Another western scholar thinks that postmodernists need reality because 'Postmodern ecology, economy, and community need to be grounded and centered in reality if they are to resist hypermodern disorientation and desiccation.'[35] From a realist philosophical perspective, Hilary Putnam argues that deconstruction, for instance, moves from relativism to nihilism

without offering us a definition of the nature of truth, but rather informing us that the truth is an incoherent aspect of a metaphysics of presence.[36] Moreover, relativism, which is akin to a collective, rather than a solitary, solipsism is not an adequate answer to a lack of a metaphysical foundation, and it does not offer us a coherent position from which we can begin to comprehend how we can use language without having a metaphysical foundation.[37] With respect to Derrida, I do not agree that his position leads necessarily to nihilism. It does, however, embody a radical scepticism. What protects him from the charge of nihilism is the importance of play in his philosophy and the ludic way in which he does philosophy. Other postmodernists are too life-affirming to be classified as nihilist, even with the preoccupation with death of some of them and the emphasis on subjects like abjection and suffering. Even if it is impossible to find a permanent truth or ethical value, the postmodern thinkers considered in this work reveal a positive attitude toward language. In fact, Indian philosophers can justifiably find the postmodernists guilty of worshipping at the altar of language or caught in a state of bondage to it.

Derrida attempts to avoid any kind of bondage by means of play, which allows differences to develop and binary oppositions to remain in tension. Play is opposed to hierarchy and tends to disrupt such structures. The philosophy of Abhinavagupta is an excellent example of the kind of philosophical hierarchy, forming a structured reality that is created by various metaphysical principles in a graded hierarchy, that Derrida's notion of play is intended to counter. In Abhinavagupta's philosophical system, there is a unity (*abheda*) at the highest level of metaphysical principles, which correspond to various planes of existence, and at the lower levels there is difference, distinction, and division between, for instance, oneself and objects. In contrast, Derrida wants to maintain the play of differences in an endless play of thought and language. Derrida's notion of play is not only opposed to the hierarchy of Abhinavagupta's philosophy, but it is also against such a complete philosophical system. A western critic sees a couple of problems with Derrida's use of play. The use of play as a philosophical strategy leads Derrida into an anti-dialectical impasse of thesis and antithesis: 'The difficulty of maintaining such an impasse... is indicated by Derrida's own slips into hierarchical privileging at various times, his assertions of the ontological priority of play or of *différance*.'[38] The other problem with play is that it creates an opening for the tragic due to its ability to act as protest against a hierarchical order, but it possesses an inability to effect the transformation of such a hierarchy.[39] Thus play can be as problematic as the hierarchical structures that it opposes.

Throughout the course of this book, we have encountered several major criticisms of postmodernism from the perspective of Indian philosophers. From the viewpoint of different Indian philosophers, postmodern philosophy is deficient because of its negative image of freedom, its inherent henophobic character, and its lack of seriousness due to its substitution of seriousness by play. Moreover, the extreme emphasis on difference or différance results in the disappearing of all distinctions and the self. This radical result is not necessary as evident by the dualistic philosophy of Mạdhva that also emphasizes difference. Indian philosophers tend to agree with Rorty's criticism of the term différance as used by Derrida, which he claims is not a word or a concept. Rorty's point is that the first time that Derrida used the term could be termed a misspelling, but subsequent usage transformed a collocation of letters into a word. The result is that Derrida gets, in the end, a concept, which is what he was trying to avoid because 'Any word that has a use automatically signifies a concept.'[40]

Indian thinkers also take exception to the anti-intuitionist, anti-foundationalist, and anti-metaphysical positions of postmodernism. Derrida's sharp criticism of logocentrism, a metaphysics of presence, suggests, for instance, that it is impossible to have any access to a transcendental signified, because there are only signs that refer to other signs in an endless chain of signification from which it is impossible to extricate oneself.[41] Based on the thrust of their works, Indian philosophers agree with Rorty's assessment of Derrida's criticism of logocentrism when he claims that Derrida does not present rigorous arguments against it and to think that he can find a neutral basis from which to launch his case is a 'logocentric hallucination.'[42] Furthermore, the zealous criticisms of logocentrism by postmodernists have blinded them to their own anthropocentrism.[43]

As already mentioned, Indian philosophers think that the postmodern understanding of freedom is generally a negative conception because it represents a freedom from something or some undesirable condition but not a freedom to something, whereas the ultimate value of Indian philosophy is freedom, which includes total control over oneself and one's environment. This total control can extend to others and even to physical instances of power in the universe.[44] The problematic nature of freedom for postmodern philosophers is evident if we consider their general notion of the self. The problem with freedom becomes manifest 'if the postmodern subject is diffused by fortuitous forces, split open by a ceaseless play of difference, then there would seem nothing to which the idea of freedom could be attached.'[45] Unlike the postmodern philosophers, the path to freedom for Indian thinkers is also a convenient means to verify one's philosophy. In contrast, there is no principle of verification in postmodern philosophy.

Based on the general pattern of their thoughts and attitudes, Indian philosophers (including Abhinavagupta because of the lack of a ritualistic context among postmodernists and the overall goal of his philosophy) think that notions like erring in the work of Taylor, play in the philosophy of Derrida, eroticism in the thought of Bataille, and carnivalesque in the philosophy of Kristeva are suggestive of decadence. Fredric Jameson, a leading American proponent of the postmodern viewpoint, admits openly that decadence is a characteristic of postmodernism: '"Decadence" is thus in some way the very premonition of the postmodern itself, but under conditions that make it impossible to predict that aftermath with any sociological or cultural accuracy, thereby diverting the vague sense of a future into more fantastic forms, all borrowed from the misfits and eccentrics, the perverts and the Others, or aliens, of the present (modern) system.'[46] The decadence of postmodernism contrasts sharply with the more sober and moderate approach of Indian philosophy, although the call for renunciation by many Indian thinkers appeared to be a bit radical for numerous Indian citizens in its historical time and place.

If we attempt to look at postmodernism through the eyes of Indian philosophers, it appears to be a very politically orientated kind of thought. In fact, it is not merely very political, but it is

intentionally revolutionary.[47] The role of desire in the work of Deleuze and Guattari, for instance, threatens society because it is revolutionary.[48] Moreover, their schizophrenic process possesses the potential for revolution. Kristeva views her work as revolutionary and following the spirit of Mao Tse-tung. According to her sympathetic interpretation, Mao's philosophy represents an advance over previous Marxist theory and embodies subjectivity like that necessary for Hegel's Absolute Idea.[49] Bataille's work also possesses a revolutionary impetus.[50] Not attempting to recapture the past as it really was, Foucault's historical works are more akin to fiction because his basic aim is to destroy or revolutionize the present. In this way, historical analysis becomes an important part of the political struggle.[51] The decadent and revolutionary features of postmodern philosophy are examples of its excessive nature.

It should be obvious that it is impossible to reconcile any of the postmodernists considered in this study with any of the Indian philosophers, even though some postmodernists appear to have more in common with Nikāya Buddhists than with the Hindu thinkers. I think that it is possible to conceive of the Indian figures as systematic philosophers, whereas the postmodernists can be called edifying philosophers, following the lead of Rorty. According to Rorty's definition, edifying philosophers refuse to claim that they have discovered objective truth, although they do keep the dialogue going in part because they are committed to finding more interesting and fruitful ways of conversing with others.[52] Rorty calls edifying thinkers like the various postmodernists discussed in this book, who are skeptical about systematic philosophy, peripheral philosophers, a designation with which postmodernists would tend to agree because of their emphasis on marginality.[53]

WHEN THE END IS NOT AN ENDING

If we look at the Biblical creation myth in the book of Genesis as a model for the western conception of history, we find that the narrative of the myth begins at the beginning and concludes with a view of the end of time, an apocalypse. This linear conception of time represents a harmonious structure with the beginning in harmony with the end, the middle in concord with

the beginning and end.[54] Discussing the genre of apocalyptic literature in his own skeptical and ironical manner, Derrida thinks that we cannot know the apocalyptic tone because it keeps leaping from one place to another, from one end to another, and one tone to another. Since it always refers to the tone and name of the other that is both absent and present, it is continually coming and never fully arriving in the present moment.[55] The genre of apocalyptic writings represents an example of the revelation of a transcendental structure that points only to itself, which suggests that it is not a self-presentation and does not reveal a definite destination.[56]

Apocalyptic writings, embodying a revelatory tone, intend to signify the truth to others that the end is imminent. Due to this revelatory unveiling process in apocalyptic literature, the truth itself becomes the end. This ironically presents a real problem for apocalyptic literature. Derrida explains: 'The structure of truth here would be apocalyptic. And that is why there would not be any truth of the apocalypse that is not the truth of truth.'[57] In other words, apocalyptic literature is only about itself or only signifies its own truth and not the truth in and of itself. Thus there is no transcendental truth revealed by any apocalyptic literature. This possesses implications for the end and beginning, according to Derrida: 'The end is beginning, it signifies the apocalyptic tone.'[58] One does not necessarily have to accept Derrida's clever deconstruction of the apocalyptic genre in order to appreciate that the end can really signify a beginning. Within the context of this dialogue between postmodern thinkers and selected Indian thinkers, this work represents a beginning, and not an end or conclusion.

In fact, there can be no conclusion, no final solution, or final resolution from the postmodern viewpoint because it is not possible to justify an absolute ending within the context of a hermeneutical dialogue. I tend to agree with Taylor when he writes: 'Conclusions, however, always remain inconclusive. Every text is an unconcluding postscript that is a pretext to/for another postscript.'[59] Taylor's non-conclusive conclusion is that we are left with an interlude. When used in the context of music an interlude suggests something in between the major pieces of music. If the term interlude is used in a context suggesting time, it indicates a pause.

Within the context of comparative philosophy, an interlude suggests that there are no final conclusions, and there is no end to the dialogue. Since comparative philosophy embodies a sense of interlude, this means that the hermeneutical dialogue is always between dialogical encounters at the margins of cultures. The dialogue of comparative philosophy never ends; it is impossible for it to end due to its inherent dynamic to move on to the next dialogical encounter. At most, there can only be a pause in comparative philosophy. On the phenomenon of an ending, Blanchot writes, 'The writer never knows whether the work is done.'[60] Based on what I stated about the interlude embodied within comparative philosophy, I agree with Blanchot because I also know that this work is not done.

ENDNOTES

1. Mohanty, p. 299.
2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 13.
3. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p. 93.
4. Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard and trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 12.
5. Lacan, *Seminar I*, p. 167.
6. Taylor, *Deconstructing Theology*, p. 48.
7. Jacques Derrida, *Spurs*, trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 103.
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55. Jacques Derrida, *D'un ton apocalyptique: Adopté naguère en philosophic* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1983), pp. 76–7.
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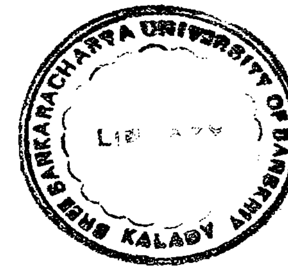
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